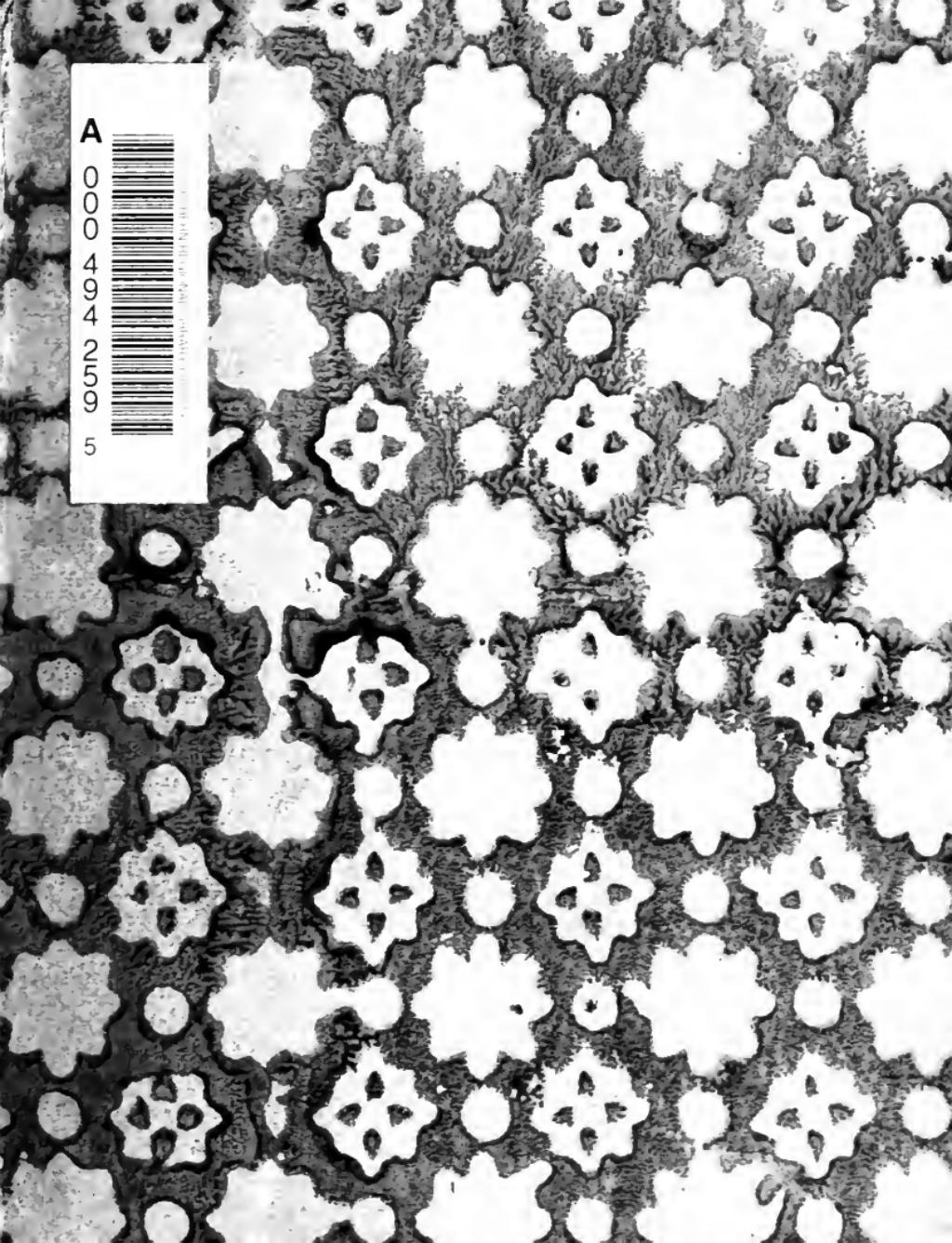


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THREE PLAYS.

DR. SYLVESTER'S SUPPER.

THE LAST DAY OF DAPHNE.

CYTHERA.

SUNDERLAND :

PRINTED BY HILLS AND CO., 19 FAWCETT STREET.

1911.



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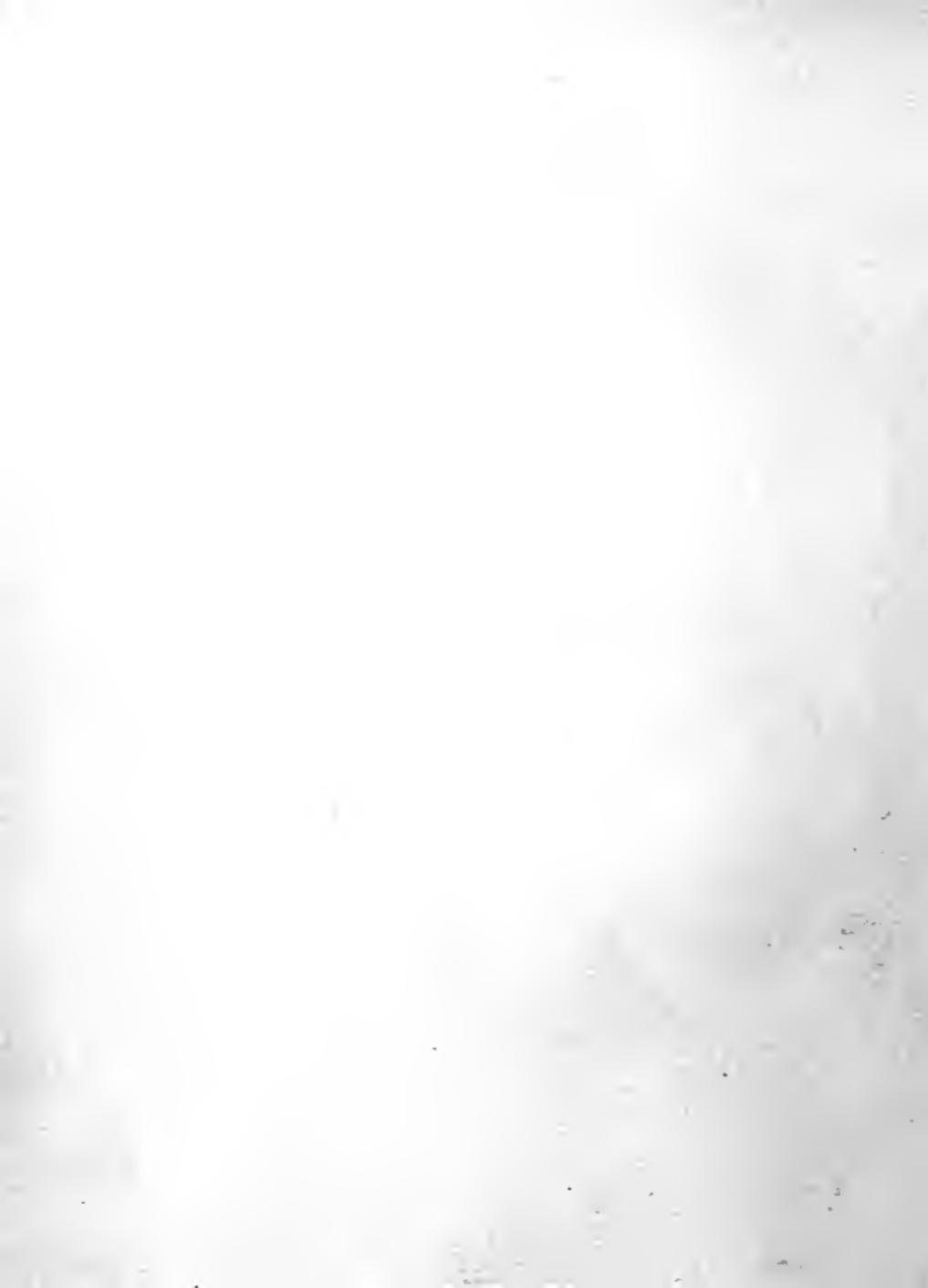
CONTENTS.

	PAGE
DR. SYLVESTER'S SUPPER	- - - - 3
THE LAST DAY OF DAPHNE	- - - - 67
CYTHERA	- - - - - 133

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DOCTOR SYLVESTER'S SUPPER.



DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

DOCTOR SYLVESTER.

AVIS - - - *His Ward.*LENORE - - - *A former Mistress of Sylvester.*

MADAM POMEROY.

ROBIN - - - *A Lad.*SIMON BALE - - *A Neighbour.*CANDACE - - - *A Negress, Servant to Sylvester.*

1ST MASQUE

2ND MASQUE

3RD MASQUE

- *Visionary Appearances.*

A VOICE.

PERIOD.—THE EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

The scene is laid in Dr. Sylvester's parlour in Salem, America. A long, low window to middle of scene, a door communicating with a garden, left, and a cut-off corner and door into a smaller room right, which wall becomes a transparent gauze during Sylvester's vision. To extreme left a fireplace, with a furnace, alembicks, etc.

MADAM POMEROY.—(*Reading from a paper at table near door LEFT*) :

What have we in the Flying Mercury?

A Romish Mass-house in Moorfields surpris'd,

The priest imprison'd and the flock dispers'd,

A flaming meteor falls at Middelburg.

The Young Pretender to St. Germains goes,

A true black tulip blooms in Amsterdam.

The Queen of Spain miscarrys of a Prince,

—Venetian Commonwealth—the Grand Signor.

But, what is this, scored thro', but underlined,

‘The ship “Good Hope” for Europe clears to-night,

From Boston Harbour, at the turn of tide,

Half after midnight—Captain Effingham.’

Aye, doubtless, by that barque my pigeon pair

Will journey—Avis and young Gaspard Legh,

Gaspard, the Governor's darling only son,

Avis, the ward, why not the daughter, then?

Of old quack salving Doctor Sylvester—

Sylvester the Empyrick Alchemist,

The Rosicrucian Medicaster ! Aye,
 Sure she's his daughter, by what mother tho'
 I know not. There's another mystery—
 This new-come stranger that they call Lenore,
 Talk of the Devil, as they say—she's here !
 Good morrow, Madam.

LENORE.—(*Enters door RIGHT*) :

Madam Pomeroy.

(*Curtseys.*)

MADAM POMEROY :

Your most obedient Madam.

(*Curtseys.*)

LENORE :

Madam, pray——

MADAM POMEROY :

Ah, I was right, for all your Quaker garb,
 You know the habit of Society !

And in this heathen savage settlement,
How good it is to meet a sister-soul.
You have known London, Madam? Paris, too?
Nay, never tell me you are not from town—
Perchance, have been on birthdays to the Court?
Not so? Ah, well, when mourning days are done,
Then you must come to Mistress Pomeroy!
I have a baby in the London mode,
With all the fine new fashions of Cornhill,
Twice yearly sent me hither, and such lace!
French lace, that never paid a Customs due;
And scented essences, if you should lack,
I have from Europe, and my private Still—
Amber and Frangipanni, Neroly,
With Almond Water Washes; Jessamine
Pulviliros, Sweets of Portugal to burn,
Amber Confections, and Extract of Pearl,
Barbadoes Water, Citron, Anise-seed;
And, for the spleen and vapours, Eau-de-vie.
Then, if your taste incline to amulets,

I've a bone Luz, and a Bezoar stone,
And hundred vanities and trinkets more.
But there, when you have dwelt a little here,
You shall know more of Madam Pomeroy ;
But tell me of yourself. You are fatigued
By some long journey. Yes? From——

LENORE :

Far away !

MADAM POMEROY :

And I presume your baggage follows you.
By packhorse out of Boston, you were brave
To come the highway unaccompany'd.

LENORE :

I us'd the forest footpath.

MADAM POMEROY :

Braver still !

For many a rascal harbours in the woods——

Runaway negroes, rogues transported, too,
 Escaping from the godly discipline
 Of our Virginia plantations——

LENORE :

It is enough that I am safe arriv'd,
 So that must serve, good Madam Pomeroy.
 I pray you, pardon me, for I must go.

(Exit door RIGHT.)

MADAM POMEROY.—*(To herself)* :

So you are tacit, Madam, close and coy?
 But I have guess'd your secret truly—first,
 Not long from England, that is certain sure,
 At night, on foot, all baggageless, alone,
 By unfrequented by-ways hither come,
 Lame, where the anklet gall'd her, clear as day!
 A prisoner from the plantation 'scap'd.

*(Looking from window as AVIS appears
 from garden.)*

Avis, sweet child, what would you with me?

AVIS.—(*Enters door left*) :

This :

To-night, you know, is Eve of All Souls' Day,
And I would try to-night such charm, such spell,
As makes a maid her future husband see.

MADAM POMEROY :

There is the looking-glass, the melted wax—
But the Dumb Supper, that is best of all.
Laying the table as for supper, work
In utter silence, hush'd and mute and mum.
Set on the service widdershins, reverse,
After a backward-wise recited grace
Under your breath, so leave the supper, set,
Midnight shall show you what companions
Your fate reserve you ; yet, of this beware !
To-night the air is full of wandering ghosts
And restless spirits, so the sortilege
May bring you fearsome fellowship, and seat
Strange guests about your table.

AVIS :

As for that,
 By twelve o'clock I shall be far away ;
 Why should I palter with you ? Well you know—
 Else I misjudge your wits—that I, to-night,
 For England sail with my lover, Gaspard Legh.
 This mummery of supper's but to trick
 Sylvester and Lenore to think that I
 Am watching in the little parlour there,
 And, after midnight, tho' they find me fled,
 They cannot catch me.

MADAM POMEROY :

Avis, dearest child,
 I joy to think you leave this hateful coast,
 To grace an English County, but the ring,
 Sweet child, the ring ! for troth plight still will hold,
 Once seal'd and settled with a bride-ring.

AVIS :

Nay,

He swears that he will marry me in church
Once we're in England.

MADAM POMEROY :

When you're rich and gay—
Wedded or not, you shall be gay and rich—
Then you must send for Madam Pomeroy,
Who wears her life out far away from town—
Here in this curs'd plantation, overseas !
When you are gone, what will become of me ?
Spleen or strong waters, will fulfil my day,
Or, haply, I shall grow religious,
Wax fanatic, and, like to Dame Lenore,
Wear out the hours upon my marrowbones,
Or turn a Catholic and seek Quebec.

AVIS :

That were as mad as Doctor Sylvester,
Who melts his substance in a crucible,

With dissolution and with sublimation,
 Seeking that stone of the Philosophers,
 Which turns old age to youth, and lead to gold.
 Gossip, what think you of this alchemy?

MADAM POMEROY :

True, long ago, with old Sylvester here,
 I know the names of all the learned rout—
 Albertus Magnus, Hermes Trismegist,
 With Raymond Lully, aye, and Michael Scot,
 And Paracelsus, but I need no spell,
 Retorts, cucurbites, and such-like gear
 Of these old wizards, turning lead to gold,
 I use the old unfailing woman's way.

AVIS :

And that is, Gossip——?

MADAM POMEROY :

This great world of gulls
 For my alembick, for transmuting stone,

My quick wits working on their leaden brain,
 Whereof the issue oft turns gold for me !

AVIS :

O, held I the elixir, I would change
 The dull recurrence of the dawn, the day,
 The dusk, the darkness ! In my universe
 A scarlet midnight and a purple noon
 Should scare the world at whiles ; I'd have the sea
 Of Marischal, Tuberose, and Bergamot,
 A world of scent and colour, gems and light—
 No order'd hours, no deliberate days.
 In time of waxing night, and failing sun,
 I'd shame with corn November's scarcity,
 And shed in summer intempestive snows
 To sprinkle roses oversunn'd of June !

MADAM POMEROY :

Nay, it were foolish so to spend the spell.
 Believe me, child, you are too fanciful,

And lately you are alter'd—troubl'd. Eh?
 Well, Pomeroy is still your faithful friend.
 Have you forgotten Alison Crowboro' ?
 That nun-like flower of perfect purity,
 So cold she chill'd mere mortal bystanders,
 When kind old Deacon Alleyn, saintly man !
 To feel for her so deeply—brought her here.
 Where had she been but for poor Pomeroy
 And the wise Doctor Sylvester ?

AVIS :

But she,
 Or he, or they, repay'd your service well.
 You are not wont to work for love alone,
 As witness here this empty purse of mine,
 The vacant case where late my necklet lay,
 My ringless fingers !

MADAM POMEROY :

Sure, ungrateful girl,
 The labourer is worthy of his hire,

And most I work for the pure love of it,
Toiling among our friends and neighbours here.
And if I sometimes cut the cards for them,
Or stick a puppet full of corking pins—
Vexing a stingy, old, exacting spouse,
To please a jealous or a weary wife—
Woman should stand by woman, that's my creed ;
The men are wolves who raven for the lambs,
And we soft-hearted sheep must hold together.
So much the world has taught poor Pomeroy !

AVIS :

Poor Pomeroy ! You are misunderstood.
There is a many words begin with P,
That folks ill-natur'd still apply to you.
Yet there is something I would ask you—this :
A soothing potion, I desire a drug—
But not what made Ralph Archer sleep so sound—
This is to drowse Sylvester for to-night,
One night, but not for ever !

MADAM POMEROY :

Cruel girl !

I swear that what Ralph drank was colourless
As purest water. Overheated men,
Sweating from Sun, or passion, or the two,
Who swill cold water, likely come to die !

AVIS :

What you may do is no concern of mine ;
I would not harm Sylvester, that is all.

MADAM POMEROY :

Why have you harsh words for poor Pomeroy,
Who loves you dearly; smile now ! You to-day
Look sweetly, child, perhaps a thought too pale,
But I have Spanish wools, for white or red,
'Would set a rose-flush on a corpse's cheek,
Or blanch the face of fever.

AVIS :

Keep your paints,
 To use upon your own fast withering cheek ;
 Young blood is still the finest rouge, and locks
 One's own far better than the high-pil'd plaits,
 Shorn from the gaol imprison'd, mad or dead !

MADAM POMEROY :

I am not Avis, a mere girl like you,
 But many a man, aye, and the most of men,
 Prefer a woman form'd to a raw girl.

AVIS :

Well, I have heard it oft, and now believe
 God's good to women, that they never mark
 Their long desir'd beauty's slow decay !
 Once lovely still is lovely, to the eyes
 That peer into the mirror at herself,
 And shall be, till the dim eyes see no more.
 Her new sheep's teeth more even than her own,

Whiteleaded, raddled, she'll outblush her prime,
 And still her latest tête becomes her best.
 Content tho' she may bloat like Jonah's gourd,
 Or shrivel like a hemlock in the frost.
 'I was a may-pole in my girl-hood raw,
 But how improved in hips and bosom since,'
 The monster titters, whilst the bag-of-bones
 Bethinks her ; 'I am slim and modish now,
 That once was blowsy, and the cabbage rose
 Became me not as now the lilies do !'

MADAM POMEROY :

Well, Avis, well—natheless I will not mind.
 You shall not say you vex'd poor Pomeroy,
 Who'd work her fingers to the bone for you.
 Here in the bag I have the hood and cloak,
 The capucin you bade me bring you——

AVIS :

Good,——

MADAM POMEROY :

. . . And mask to keep the coaches dust at bay.
 A rarity in this outlandish place,
 But years agone in London well I mind
 That every woman mask'd her to the play,
 To veil the shame she feign'd, but did not feel,
 The blush, tho' due, that tarry'd yet to rise
 At Sedley or Centlivre's ribaldry.
 Sure hoop and pannier, fardingale and fan,
 With patches, deftly this or that way set,
 Will pass away and come again in time.
 The fashion still is like a turning wheel,
 What under was, next moment's uppermost ;
 Tho' yellow ruffs with Mistress Turner died,
 I wager we shall see them spring again.

AVIS :

I go to lay the supper against to-night
 Who knows what guests may gather round
 the board ?

(*She retires laughing, RIGHT.*)

(**SYLVESTER** enters from *Garden.*)

MADAM POMEROY :

Give you good Morrow Master Sylvester !
 How goes the great work? Still the furnace burns.
 You, if a man may, should th' elixir find,
 And yet the years go by, it 'scapes you still,
 But Age comes on you, and the fire burns low !

SYLVESTER :

Aye, 'Vita Ignis, Corpus Lignum Est.'
 Life is the fire and the fuel are we !

MADAM POMEROY :

And as his shadow follows on a man,
 So hangs the devil ever at his heels.

SYLVESTER :

Better than he should follow, than should lead,
 Laodicean Mother Pomeroy,

Who have the inclination for all ill,
And courage lack to perfect it, content
To trail at the fringe of the Devil's draggled skirts,
Rather than make him do your bidding.

MADAM POMEROY :

Aye,
But that commits a body, so no pact !
When you, long years ago, did, half in jest,
Sign, seal, deliver, that wicked document,
Providing if ever you th' Elixir found
You render'd up your soul——

SYLVESTER :

Where was it then ?
Either in Rome or in high Germany.
Have I not first frequented, then forsook
Schools of Bologna, Paris, Padua,
Ferrara, Louvain, Basel—having won

Whatever of wisdom each had got to give,
I bind it now within this breast of mine !
Have I not toil'd thro' many a weary year,
Seeking in still, retort, and pelican,
That supreme secret of Alchemistry,
Azoth, the Alcahest, the Sophic Fire,
The Catholick and Universal Ens,
That turns an old man to his youth again.
But in those far off days, I reason'd well
One traitor from within may ope a gate,
That bade defiance to a myriad men,
Who storm it from without, and one there was,
High in the counsels of his mighty King
Aforetime, since, in exile and disgrace,
Ready to sell the secrets taught him once,
To gain another subject for himself.
So ran my reasoning when I was young,
But now I need no Fiend's assistance, years
Have taught what is the best Familiar,
Undaunted Will ! to keep one end in view,

Nor suffer wave or wind of Circumstance
To bend the iron stanchion of your will.
Run the black ensign to the masthead up,
And take command, first casting overboard
Conscience, the super cargo querulous !

MADAM POMEROY :

How, Sylvester, cast Conscience overside,
To reign sole captain of a brigand barque ?
Beware you ship not a sable Admiral,
The single handed skipper sleeps at whiles,
And as he lies in mortal somnolence,
An Alien Pilot boards him, in the night,
Steering the luckless vessel to his will !

SYLVESTER :

Conscience must overboard, his specious plea
Of Pity and Mercy poisons, else, our lives !
Pity and Mercy are man's enemies,
And I look forward till, in years to be,

Arise a Conqueror, compassionless,
 With soul self-centred, trusting in his star,
 'Will turn old Europe to one trampled field,
 Wading thro' blood and wrack of shatter'd thrones'
 Until his utmost purpose be accomplish'd.
 Who would not follow, where such leader led ?
 Aye, banish Pity, lest your dauntless will
 Flow from you, melting as the sea-borne berg
 Derelict, drifting on a Southward course,
 Feels, soft, the gulf-stream sap the base of snow !

MADAM POMEROY :

Brave words, Sylvester, you foreswear the Fiend,
 Because you know you'll never find the stone,
 Else you would tremble lest the compact held,
 Were the Elixir once by you distill'd !

SYLVESTER :

How, Witch, you taunt me that I fear the Fiend,
 And that I never the Elixir find ?

Why fool, perhaps to-night—but I'll be mum !
I fear the Devil for a jesting bond ?
Nay, I would bid him as I bid you, pack.

MADAM POMEROY :

Well, once I go, I go not to return.
Next time you need me you may whistle in vain,
Wise Master ! you have wanted me before,
Avis is feather pated, over young,
And you grown old and failing need a crutch
To prop you in your dire infirmity.

SYLVESTER :

If in the street leaning upon my cane
It serve my purpose, I am not nice to mark
In what of dust and mud the ferrule dips,
But you are a broken reed, too near the mire.

MADAM POMEROY :

Ah ! cruel man, 'twas different years ago,

And what I am you made me. If some day
 I ever were damn'd, which kind Heav'n forbid !
 'Twould be of you, you only, led astray !

SYLVESTER :

Woman look only in the glass and mark
 Your petty peevish mouth and foolish chin,
 Mean, narrow brows with envy's wrinkles scored.
 The Devil had no need your door to storm,
 For it stood ever open and ajar,
 That any wandering demon might harbour there.
 Not fenced and guarded for God's garden, you !
 Your soul lay ever fallow for the Fiend :
 No alabaster box of ointment, once
 To gracious holy service consecrate
 Turn'd now to basest uses, always you
 Were vessel of dishonour.

MADAM POMEROY :

Part we thus ?

SYLVESTER :

Aye wretched woman, Satan's renegade,
 Give up the crown you might have worn with him,
 With twice turn'd satins and in scour'd lace,
 In tarnish'd mantua dight and vested, go,
 Creep cravenly the back-stairs way to Heaven !
 And as for any terror of the Fiend,
 I should not quail or tremble now tho' Hell
 For just one night unkennelling the dainn'd
 Vomit live devils forth, to sup with me !

(SYLVESTER *goes thro' garden door, RIGHT.*)

MADAM POMEROY.—(*Looking after him*):

'Whilst the thief steals the hemp is ripening,'
 'Tis an old proverb, he shall find it true.
 Sylvester, soundly shall you sleep to-night,
 Aye, sleep, and wake to find thyself in Hell !
 You shall sup sorrow at the board of Death,
 And pledge a toast to your chap-fallen mates

Of the glistening faces and white, fish-like eyes,
Whose feast has sped, whose reckoning's to come!

(During next scene she moves about the room preparing the posset.)

(ROBIN taps on window, speaks thro' lattice.)

ROBIN :

Good Madam Pomeroy, the master ails ;
I left him yonder, calling Dame Lenore,
Or Avis, that they help him home again.
Delivering a message I had brought,
I saw him reel and totter, almost fall.

MADAM POMEROY :

What, then, the message, and by whom enjoin'd ?

ROBIN :

A woman bade me bring a word to him,
A woman, tall, who bore her like a Queen.

Beneath the cedars in the setting sun,
My eyes were dazzled, in the dying light ;
She seem'd transfigur'd : gold her garment glow'd,
Girt with the living cincture of a snake,
Flower'd with faintly flickering flowers of flame,
Whilst as of molten gold, a diadem,
Sullenly glowing, burn'd upon her brow,
And this the message she bade me give :
'To-night, Sylvester, will your bond fall due,
And payment be awaited.' Then she pass'd ;
A dusky moth lured by the endless flame,
She seem'd, in the low, red sunset, vanishing
Between the cedar and the plumpy pine.

MADAM POMEROY :

What said Sylvester when he heard of this ?

ROBIN :

He gazed upon me with so lost a look,
Haggard in horror-haunted revery,

That clay-cold terror froze me where I stood,
And I forgot to beg some euphrasy,
To clear my dim, perplex'd, and dazzled eyes.

MADAM POMEROY :

'Tis well, good Robin, you shall have your drug !
And now good-bye, good night, good sleep,
Sylvester !

*(He runs off. She places silver posset pot on hob,
and as she approaches door meets SYLVESTER,
supported by the Negress CANDACE
and LENORE.)*

LENORE :

Carry him in and lay him in his chair.

MADAM POMEROY :

Ah, madam, you have all my sympathy.
Poor Sylvester !

(Aside in his ear.)

Physician, heal thyself !

(To LENORE.)

I fear we shall not have him long with us,
And if he should revive, with wits awry !

(To CANDACE aside.)

What of the Sabbath ?

*(During speech, which CANDACE mutters to POMEROY,
LEFT, LENORE arranges pillows in settle,
with her back to them.)*

CANDACE :

'Twill be full and gay !

Sisters from all the province will be there,
For worthily we celebrate to-night
The feast-day of the King of Africa ;
Wherefore, we get us to the dim, deep woods,
With hateful hymns upon the muffled drum,
To imprecate all evil on our foes,

Chanting Obeah's praise and potency,
 With sacrifices of a hornless goat ;
 We hail and celebrate the crowned snake,
 And, worshipping, adore the powers of Ill !
 And many of your grave, God-fearing folk
 Will fare with us into the forest dim.
 Lean Madam Hemingway, the Deacon's wife,
 With other matrons as demurely famed,
 Even the Parson—whisper—may be there,
 With many Sabbath-minded of his flock
 Who met the Black Man in the Cedar Woods,
 To sign their name upon that book of his,
 And Indian Pow-wows with their painted skins,
 Will join in our congenial devilry !

MADAM POMEROY :

Here's for the Sabbath, but I will not sign !

CANDACE :

You need not sign, for in your forehead, plain

I see *his* signet glow, a blood-red brand,
 The brand that Cain bore, and his followers bear !

MADAM POMEROY.—(*Mutters to herself*) :

Nay, nay, not that, I am no murderer,
 First, 'tis not poison, but an opiate.
 Poured I too much ? It was my hand that shook,
 He has not drunk the posset, if he drink,
 'Tis Heaven, not I that wills it—I shall be
 Only the instrument of an outraged Heaven.

(*Follows CANDACE out RIGHT.*)

SYLVESTER.—(*Coming to himself*) :

There, I am better—well—a dizzy fit
 From too much bending over the furnace fire,
 From too deep breathing the alembick's fumes.
 There, so, 'tis well—do thou thy worst, Old Age !
 Perchance this night may find thy empire cease,
 Fire in the brain, fire in the heart, fire in the eye,

The blood new coursing thro' my wither'd veins,
This old, ill, life all done with.—

LENORE.—(*Aside*) :

He's prepared

(*To SYLVESTER.*)

At least to die,—aye, it may not be long
Ere Time smooth out the tangled, twisted thread,
The clew that leads us hostel-wards, at night,
To rest at that inevitable inn,
Where Death is heedless and unhasting host.

SYLVESTER :

Who speaks of Death ? I speak of Life made new,
I seek a palace in this glorious World
A fabrick visible, material,
So fair the World, it doth suffice for me,
Let others reconcile them to that rest,
To lie in the low little house where all is done !

LENORE :

When all is done, Sylvester ? Nay, alas !
All is not done, our term of living sped,
There is a Judgment still to be endured,
And endless dolour, or gladness yet to be.

SYLVESTER :

Your God may rule His heaven, but here on earth
I know two Gods, two dull unheeding Gods,
Invidious Time and cruel Circumstance,
Who ride the poor man with a double spur
Desire and Hunger, and the rich man drive
With pointed goad of dull Satiety,
Or longing for things unattainable.
To rule those Gods one must be young and strong.
There is but one life that is certain, this
We live to-day, and this we must prolong
But young, reviv'd, and reinvigorate.
No more to know the longing vain regret

For Youth so soon departed, to preserve
 Your youthful manhood in its fiery prime
 No more with impotent passionate tears to cling
 —In struggle desperate as very vain—
 To the dear past's unblossom'd leafless branch,
 Since the dun river drags you seaward still.

LENORE :

Did you grow young again indeed Sylvester,
 By some abhorr'd, prodigious miracle,
 Would second Youth be wiser than the first ?

SYLVESTER :

As in my old days, so with youth renew'd
 I still should hold it sound philosophy
 That man is compound, mind and body and soul,
 Part God, part man, part beast, and it is well
 That when the beast within you lick his chops
 And fever for a little liberty,

You let him loose to have his will awhile,
 Glutting himself, he will return again
 And, tired, bide contented in his cage——

LENORE :

—Until the day that he devour you !
 Grant your elixir to perfection come,
 'The Red Rose blossom,' as you used to say,
 How would the world be better for the boon,
 Would you take pity on the poor, the blind ?
 Sharing its pretious benefit with them ?

SYLVESTER :

Aye, would I, truly, not the first, indeed,
 Which were not for myself a drop too much,
 But as I had progress'd—the second brew ?
 That were a gift for Popes and Emperors,
 A flask or two to Philosophick friends,
 Aye, surely, in good time the poor should find
 That they were not forgotten.

LENORE :

That is well,

But in the past, Sylvester, was it so,
 Did ever your heart beat generously for them,
 God's foster-children, fasting and forlorn,
 Dids't ever claim their staion in the sun
 For those poor children of the shadow ?

SYLVESTER :

Nay,

I never wish'd to see men suffer.

LENORE :

So,

But they might suffer out of sight of you.
 Then your great gift of healing, long ago
 You oft abus'd your medicinal skill,
 Employ'd it not for solace of the sick,
 But to work vengeance, veil'd, upon a foe.

SYLVESTER :

What I have done I have done, let it be !
A new life dawns for me, and so Lenore
Be of good courage, 'ere the dawn wear grey
The sublimated Ichor is my own,
Won the great prize of all Philosophers,
And I shall hold the keys of Life and Youth,
Hasten the tardy, check the hurrying years,
To live long ages at my healthy prime,
And you, Lenore, you shall grow young with me,
I wrong'd you once, you must forget the past !

LENORE :

Nay, Sylvester, too much must I forget,
Ever to be a happy girl again,
My life has known too many a beating storm
Toss'd on too many a tumultuous sea,
The grave sole quiet haven now I crave.
A guarded flower in a garden green

That was my girlhood, till I met with you,
Since when, with leaden feet and heart on fire,—
Sowing desire but to reap disdain—
Through summer dust and winter's mire I glean'd
Uncertain harvest of the stoney street,
To find you now a broken, ill, old man,
Myself a woman worn with miseries ;
Had I not found you, from Virginia
Plantation flying, never more for me
Had lighted lattice and a hearth aglow
Held out a welcome, I was near to death,
You took me in, and that shall plead for you,
Against your sentence, at the last assize !

SYLVESTER :

I ask no advocate to plead for me
But for myself will answer—there, Lenore,
We will not talk of dying, but of life—
Our life that shall be in the years to come.
A happy life in Europe ! We will dwell

Far from these frigid summers of temper'd sun,
Nor France nor England, Italy for me !
The city call'd Parthenopé of old,
The Siren city bordering the bay,
A hem of silver on a purple sea,
Where Naples calls God's fiery judgment down,
From raging vehement Vesuvio,
The suburb stricken for the city's sin.
Something too near the elemental fires
For us cold-blooded English, what of Rome ?
Her air's too heavy with mortality,
And breathes a savour of the Cæsar's crimes,
Among the ruins of Imperial things—
Sinister, set upon her seven hills,—
She tends her dying fire, like a crone,
Crouching in purple rags above the ash,
Revolving, weary, yet insatiate
Memories of the wild, old, wicked days !
Nor will we dwell, where looking o'er the Seine,
A dull and liquorish devil leans and leers,

Brooding with mocking grin on Paris town :
 Nor yet where London, Queen of Hypocrites,
 Hides in a mist of fog and sea-coal smoke,
 Her splendid squalor and gilded infamy—
 Perchance, where Venice, flaring all with lights,
 Set like a standish in her shallow seas,
 Riots throughout a half-year's carnival ?
 Nay, best of all, where yellow Arno brims
 In one green vineyard plain by the Tuscan town,
 And cluster'd palaces of the Medici,
 We'll watch the trees rock 'gainst a golden sky,
 Swart Cypress, like a distaff for the Fates,
 Or green bronze flame aspiring silently.

LENORE :

Dreams ! Dreams !

SYLVESTER.—(*Takes the posset from the hob and drinks it*):

That yet shall be reality !

But I must rest a little whilst I may.

There's a night's work that younger, stronger men
 Than I might quail at ; I must try to sleep,
 To snatch a little dreamless deep repose,
 Last of my old age.

LENORE :

Sleep, and happy dreams
 Attend you, should you dream,
(Aside.)
 Not more fantastick
 Could any dream be than your waking one,
 Of age disspell'd and youth call'd back once more.

SYLVESTER :

Sing me some old song, that you us'd to sing ;
 Soothe this old child with some faint lullaby,
 That shall, like diver's plummet, sink me down
 Into the depths of sleep, from which return'd,
 As from a healing bath I may arise !

LENORE.—(Sings):

FINIS.

As you loiter'd where the shade is, a dainty web
you spun;

What was pleasure, now a trade is, and the wine
is on the lees.

As youth and looks slip off,
You know the chairman's scoff,

And Geneva cures no cough,

Gay Ladies.

As you haunt the bagnio,

In your mask and domino,

Gay Ladies,

A masquer black array'd is who walks behind you
—slow.

As homeward you repair,

Though you see no gallant there,

One beside you mounts the stair,

Gay Ladies.

Ah, no more you'll walk the Mall,

In your muff and cardinal,

Gay Ladies.

Your lodging score unpaid is? They'll sell to pay
your pall,

With each small high-heel'd shoe,

That such stony footpaths knew—
Did your heart ache sometimes, too?

Gay Ladies.

Nor the puppet show, nor play
May tempt you forth to-day,

Gay Ladies,

For the latest play outplay'd is, the puppets laid
away.

Watched by a wither'd crone,
Cold as marble, still as stone,
At length you sleep alone

Gay Ladies.

So farewell you mechlin tête
Your hoop, and pannier's state

Gay Ladies,

A hireling hag your maid is, and when she leaves
you, late

You've no more of lawn and lace
 Than may serve to veil your face
 From the leaden lid's disgrace

Gay Ladies.

Now she shears your pride of hair,
 Which shall deck some other fair,

Gay Ladies,

Uncounting whence the braid is so a high piled
 head she wear ;

Yet the crone sighs, ' well-a-day,
 But a paltry price they'll pay ' !
 For your gold's but gilded gray,

Gay Ladies.

SYLVESTER :

Your song has touch'd some chord my brain within,
 And long forgotten thoughts float up once more

As after storm longwhelm'd and worthless weed,
 Or waifs of spar from drown'd and ruin'd ships
 Rise from the underseas, I fain would sleep,
 Sleep till the Perfect Rose be come to bloom,
 That turns an old man to his youth again !

(SYLVESTER sinks into sleep. *The fire burns low and duskily red. The wall LEFT grows transparent and the 'Dumb Supper' table is display'd with three mask'd figures standing about it.*)

MASK'D LADY :

Well met Sylvester ! On my festa day
 I smell'd a nosegay by my husband sent,
 Believing it my gallant's offering,
 And swoon'd to death, so potent was the sweet
 Of those fair-seeming flowery hypocrites.
 Yet should I have been 'ware of poisons, I,—
 Bred of the Borgias, and to Popes akin,—

So lost my English lover, and my life,
I pledge you, for our passionate past, Sylvester !

2ND MASQUE :

After my Father's sudden, easy death,—
Lull'd by the medicine you mix'd for him,
You claim'd, returning from his obsequies
Something too much of all his garner'd gear !
Have you forgotten in the trampled snow,
Our hurry'd duel by one torch's light,
Late littered for my father's funeral,
When on my breast-bone rang your rapier's hilt,
And forth my spirit pass'd among the pines
Of my north-country moorland—Sylvester,
I pledge you.

SYLVESTER :

Ralph, Renata, can it be,
And this the third masque, is it Denzil ?

3RD MASQUE :

Aye.

At our last parting in the Seville square,—
 By whom delated to the Inquisition,
 You best should know, Sylvester, both of us
 Were cloth'd in antick raiment, wrought with
 flame,

The painted fires of the San-Benito,
 Upright on mine, on yours, 'fuego revolto,'
 The pictur'd fires turn'd downward, bye and bye
 Their fickle-figured Faith that tops the tower
 Above, glowed golden in no painted flame,
 But the fierce fire lit for me, your friend,
 Where flesh and spirit sunder'd horribly.
 I pledge you, Sylvester.

SYLVESTER :

It is a dream !

But I'll go through with it, come raise your mask
 And doff your domino.

2ND MASQUE :

We must not, here
 We keep our Carnival Incognito,
 We are but as it were an Embassage,
 Chosen from many fain of your company,
 With expectation unimaginable
 Who wait your advent.

3RD MASQUE :

Will you fare with us,
 Fare to the palace of our Princely Host,
 Where thro' high halls and league-long corridors,
 To music of eternal revelry,
 Pace the pale people of the burning heart,
 Passion's proud Daughters with the Sons of Sin !

SYLVESTER :

The burning heart, then still in Hell ye love,
 And I should find the lemans of my youth,
 And half a hundred ladies of my prime ?

1ST MASQUE :

What, love in Hell, so once a poet feign'd,
 And he is curs'd by many a soul that sinn'd,
 Who sang of guilty lovers, side by side,
 Faring together thro' unending storm,
 Twin wither'd leaves upon the wind of Hell——

SYLVESTER :

Yet having this of heav'n that still they love ?

2ND MASQUE :

Nay, there's no love in Hell ! Your craving lips,
 Your asking eyes would meet blank unresponse,
 Your hand that fain would clasp, meet hand that
 clench'd,
 For Haggard Hate glows in our burning eyes,
 And all despair our hollow heart fulfils
 In an equality of joyless years—
 For none grow old, tho' each has lost her youth,

We pass our endless hours, insatiate.
Only our hair in youth's abundance grows,
And turns a torture to the aching brain,
Crisping and curling on our ashen brows,
Pale forehead scor'd with Passions hieroglyph,
Over our beauty's ruin, tired eyes,
Sunk cheek, and writhen lips of a fever'd mouth,
That ever laughs, but smiles not ever, at all.
O agony of fix'd unclosing lids
Under the blasting cressets above that flare,
Reverberate from the slabb'd asphaltum way,
No respite ever of dew, of dawn, of tears !
No light wind stirs, no spring-time wakes again,
But swooning scents make faint the icy air
Where spiring incense fumes unceasingly.

3RD MASQUE :

Come, I grow home-sick for the harmony
Of our Eternal holiday in Hell.
I hear the echo of our revelry !

Faint hollow music ever breathing up
 In unsurpass'd soul-trancing symphony
 To utter consummation of all desire,
 That just as eager longing grows piercing pain,
 Dies off, until it rack your soul once more
 With the bitter joy of its hateful melody,
 And leave you again a soul gall-surfeited
 With sick dissatisfaction of unsinned sin !

2ND MASQUE :

Nay, there's no love in Hell but only Hate !!

3RD MASQUE :

But the night wears, and we shall meet anon,
 We must not linger, tho' our Prince and Lord
 For just one night unkennelling the damn'd,
 Hath loos'd live Devils forth to sup with you,
 Yet are we on parole, and must return !

(They laugh and disappear.)

(SYLVESTER groans and stirs in his sleep. The logs of the fire fall apart. A knock is heard at the window.)

LENORE :

Who knocks so late?

BALE :

Your neighbour Simon Bale,
I have a word for Doctor Sylvester.

LENORE :

Is it of import, for the old man sleeps ?

BALE :

Take you the message then, an hour ago
Crossing the forest clearing, I did meet
An Indian Squaw who ask'd a word of me
And bade me tell Sylvester that to-night
The time accomplish'd was, and payment due
Awaited by the holder of the bond.

LENORE :

How strange an hour to demand a debt,
Knew you the woman ?

BALE :

All unknown to me,
One of a tribe beyond the woods, mayhap,
But, strangely, on the finger of her hand
A ring of molten metal seemed to cling,
And all the wood was full of sudden calls,
And cries, now single, now of multitudes,
Like mocking peals of laughter——

LENORE :

Frighted birds——

BALE :

Aye, maybe, tho' I never heard the like,
Birds they might be, and frightened by a fire
Which in the distance glow'd among the pines,

That blaz'd one moment sky-ward, and the next,
Made with its dying all the wood more dim.
Well, I have told my message, so farewell.

(SYLVESTER *moves in his sleep, sighs and wakes.*)

SYLVESTER :

It was a dream, a dream foreboding, what?
These last few days I've had a brooding sense
A strange, confus'd, distracted memory,
Of obscure ominous presages half-forgot,
Like warning of too-late remember'd dream,—
Equivocal menace of a half-caught word
Of threatening danger vizarded and veil'd,
Whisper'd by muffled dancers at a masque.

LENORE :

Ah, yet Sylvester, it is not too late,
To take the warning, only pray and weep,
'Ere the long-boded meaning break on you

Like ill news read by light'ning, in a storm,
 And looking back clear shall the sense appear
 Of what seem'd hidden, hieroglyphick, script,
 Till penitent tears had wash'd your vision clear,
 Repent, Sylvester, call upon the sky,
 For you are old and have offended Heaven,
 Weep, pray, repent, lay by your stubborn pride,
 Call on the Infinite Mercy !

SYLVESTER :

Nay, Lenore,

If in the angry heats of burning Youth—
 Heady and fierce as the Italian springs—
 I sinn'd, as men count sinning, I my sin
 Regret not and repent not, what I might
 Have done and did not, solely I repent,
 And count for merit of my own deserts
 That wilful sadness, listless weariness,
 Or dull indifference I never knew.
 Extreme in pleasure, as in toil extreme,

On my own actions let me stand or fall !
 But the night wears, heap up the furnace fire,
 How low it burns, or do mine eyes grow dim ?

(Tearing books and manuscripts.)

Here is the 'Tree of the Hesperides'
 And Raymond Lully's 'Dark-dispelling Lamp,'
 'Triumphal Chariot' of Basilides,
 I need no more the lore of these Adepts.
 Here's the Italian Master's 'Pearl of Price,'

(Throws them on the fire.)

And bosom book of the Canon of Bridlington.
 Heap fuel, blow the bellows, see Lenore,
 How the Elixir changes momently,
 With the intensest element of fire
 The vary'd colours of the peacock's tail
 Which emerald grew after the third degree,
 Now turn to snowy whiteness, citron next,
 Then it shall glow at last to glorious red !

LENORE :

Sylvester, what belated visitant
 With lilting voice and high unmirthful laugh,
 And restless, padding foot-fall to and fro
 Paces without? The light, uneasy step,—
 Soft as a child's and restless as a beast's—
 Thrills me with foolish, causeless fear.

THE VOICE.—(*From without*):

Sylvester

The hour has come!

SYLVESTER :

Hour of my victory!
 Over th' inveterate adversary age.
 Is the door bolted fast? Who trys the bolt?

LENORE.—(*Looking thro' the key-hole*):

Only I see a slim and dusky hand
 That fingers at the latch!

SYLVESTER :

Pile up the fire !

Only an hour to the dawning, God,
 To die a dog's death in a dumb despair
 With the Elixir brimming at my lips,
 Never ! I set my will against the Fiend's !

THE VOICE :

The hour has come Sylvester.

SYLVESTER.—(*Stooping over the fire*) :

I prevail !
 The brew glows golden, I outwit the Fiend !
 Go slinking watcher, waiting there without,
 I can defy you Devil, even now
 Bubbles and stirs within the crucible
 Glows in the glass the Perfect Rose supreme,
 The Red, Red Rose of the Philosophers.
 Here is the flower of my magistry,
 Water of Life, the priceless Arcanum

Healing disease and all infirmity,
 That turns my Old Age back to Youth again !
 I can lay by Mortality, and strip
 The outworn garment of my years away,

*(He lifts the glass which glows to a glorious
 golden red.)*

I drink Undying Youth.

THE VOICE :

Sylvester come !
 Your labour's lost.

*(The glass drops with a crash from his hands.
 He falls face forward. Whole stage
 darkens.)*

SYLVESTER :

What, is this darkness Death ?

THE VOICE :

Your labour's lost.

(*The door bursts open.*)

LENORE.—(*Crouching in the ashes*):

Lost Soul, lost Sylvester !

(*SCENE CLOSES.*)

THE LAST DAY OF DAPHNE.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

LIBANIUS	}	-	<i>Philosophers.</i>
THEMISTIUS		-	
ASCLEPIADES	-	-	<i>Priest of Apollo.</i>
CALLIXENA	-	-	<i>An agéd Priestess of Demeter.</i>
ION	-	-	<i>A devout Child.</i>
MELISSA	}	-	<i>Young Lovers.</i>
NARCISSUS		-	
OPORA	-	-	<i>A Flute-Player.</i>
LYSIS	-	-	<i>Her Lover.</i>
ISIAS	-	-	<i>A Pilgrim from Egypt.</i>
AGLÄIA	-	-	<i>A Young Girl of Antioch.</i>
MYRTO	-	-	<i>Her Maid.</i>
DAMIS	-	-	<i>An Old Man.</i>
MYSTA	-	-	<i>A Temple Attendant.</i>
THEONÖE	-	-	<i>The Sibyl of Daphne.</i>
FLAVIAN	-	-	<i>A young Roman in love with Theonöe.</i>

PILGRIMS, GARLAND SELLERS, CHILDREN.

Voices of an unseen mob.

Before the Curtain rises, a hymn is sung by Pilgrims within the Temple, who answer the question of ASCLEPIADES.

CHORAL HYMN.

ASCLEPIADES :

Whence come ye, Pilgrims to the speaking spring
 Of the unconquer'd comrade, priest and King,
 Far-voyaging ?

PILGRIMS :

From the Mother of Mirage, marvellous Asia,
 Where elephants processionally rank'd
 In far Taprobané,
 Like milk white mountains meekly bow the knee,
 From immemorial magical Asia,
 Whose praise is sung by Brachmans yellow
 prank'd
 Where Holy Ganga dreams through India.

From the Mother who weaves us silk of deftest dye
 —Spun in dim depth of secret Serica,—
 And cunning broidery.

ASCLEPIADES :

And ye whence come ye led of your desire
 To the lyric leader of the starry Quire
 The Purifier ?

PILGRIMS :

From the mighty Mother of music, Africa,
 Where Egypt Nilus' yearly bounty craves
 To flood her land of drought.
 Where first, long since, the thrilling harp rang
 out,
 'Ere yet the cymbal was, or cithara
 From the midnight Mother of ebony, Nubia,
 Mart of the ivory tusks, the sable slaves.
 Mysterious Mother of marvels, Africa,
 Whose voice inviting to venturous voyages,

Calls yet 'twixt Calpe's height, and Abyla
 Unto remotest seas.

ASCLEPIADES :

And yet, who by the incense altar linger
 To praise the unerring, far-darting, bow-stringer
 The Sweetest Singer ?

PILGRIMS :

From the odorous Mother of Myrrh, Arabia,
 Who bids on every altar incense wreath
 From happy spice-land sweet.
 Whose Queens in royal weed, from head to feet
 Dyed with thy purple pomp, Phœnicia,—
 The fainting potency of perfume breathe.
 From cinnamon, cedar, sandal, cassia ;
 The while the fateful stars doth soothly scan
 —Thy spell enforc'd stars, Arabia—
 The pale rapt Magian.

SCENE.

THE GROVE OF DAPHNE OUTSIDE ANTIOCH.

Forecourt of Apollo's Temple. Cypress and Cedar trees of the Daphne Wood seen to the left, above the wall. The colonnade and steps of the Temple to the right. A wall surrounds the court with a large grille at the extreme left. About midway in the wall a niche holds a statue of the Ephesian Artemis, before which are flowers and a burning taper. The shadow of the great image of the God Apollo is thrown across the stage from within the Temple and slowly lessens as the scene goes on.

LIBANIUS, THEMISTIUS, DAMIS, LYSIS, and OPORA are seated on the steps of the Temple.

As the hymn ends ASCLEPIADES passes slowly between the columns down the steps.

(*Curtain rises.*)

OPORA :

Once more the dawn's recurrent miracle !
 Cloudless, save for one little cloud that seems
 A rout of rose leaves blown across the sky,
 Above the vineyards of Mount Silpius.
 The world, dawn-dewy, is a world made new,
 And Beauty's self seems rising from the sea,
 Born from the Sun's caressing of the wave.
 Whilst, as the light strikes thwart across his fane
 The shadow of the Golden God withdraws.
 Only a fallen blossom testifies
 To last night's tempest.

THEMISTIUS.—(*Raising his hand to the Image of Apollo*) :

Helios, Radiant King,
 Paian, befriend us in that last, worst, wind
 That darkest night, that most distracting storm
 Which some day blows for all who sail this sea.

Whether it whelm us memory-less and lost
In the abysmal gulf of nothingness,
Or cast us on a shadow-haunted shore
For ultimate purgation by a fire—
As soiled asbestos whitens in the flame—
Or, maybe waft us to the fortunate isles,
Of lost Atlantis, then at last regained.

DAMIS.—(*To LIBANIUS*) :

What stir unwonted fills the fane to-day ?
It has not known such throng of pilgrimage,
These many years. From ancient villages
Sequester'd, and great cities far away
Flock in the faithful of the Elder Gods,
Stirring old echoes that I thought were dead.
On altars long neglected incense fumes,
Whilst wreathéd roses round the image flung—
Riot with more than Egypt's opulence.

LIBANIUS :

Know that to-day the Galilean horde
 Bear forth the body of their Babylas,
 Expell'd this all too long polluted grove.
 And fervent, the devout in Antioch
 Pray the great giver of good, Father of light,
 Breathing by Sibylline Theonœ
 To grant them answer of his speaking spring,—
 Silent so long thro' presence of the dead—
 How fares our hope, our stay, our Julian
 Upon his Parthian venture.

DAMIS :

Well ye do,

Seeking enlightenment of Helios,
 Truth's self, the Sun all-seeing. Not for me
 Serapis' screed delivered in a dream,
 Or chance-caught word in temple Memphian,
 I sue not at such seats of sooth-saying
 As where, by torch-light, men at Megara,

With lore of Chthonian mysteries, compel
An oracle obscure of age-old Night ;
Winning a dubious light from darkness' self.
Nor, impious, seek from deaf inarticulate Earth
To wring ambiguous answer in the cave
Trophonian.

THEMISTIUS :

The true Philosopher

At every fane should be a neophyte,
Initiate of every mystery,
Enquirer at every oracle.
From Delos' conscious antre to Deplhi's cave,
From the Trophonian chasm to the height
Where Carmel tends an ever-burning fire,
Or Aphrodité by a falling star
Answers her worshippers on Lebanon,
To misty Mona with her Druid rites,
Culling the best of many an alien faith
To bind it in the nose-gay of his own,

A link the more in the gold unending chain
 From Hermes Trismegist thro' Orpheus down
 To us late guardians of the mysteries.

(Isias passes up towards the Temple.)

But here is Isias just from Thebes returned.
 What learned you of the priests Egyptian,
 What wisdom found you in the desert sands,
 Under that clear *Æ*therial canopy
 Where most one seems to commune with the Gods ?

ISIAS :

I gazed upon the unregarding Sphynx
 Who heeds not Time's insidious injuries,
 Or slow-corroding outrage of the years,
 But gazes, blind, across the desert sand
 The drifted dust her world that overwhelm'd
 As long as Nilus lapse to meet the sea
 Still subtly smiling thro' her stony sleep !
 I sought, I found, I worshipp'd Destiny.

THE PILGRIM OF FATE.

To Destiny I pilgrim went
For whom alone no altars rise,
No incense fumes, no spikenard drips.
She gazes down the centuries
On all eternity intent.
A smile upon her marble lips.

I mute before her Idol bowed
Whose peace nor praise nor prayer stirs,
Whom Gods revere and Dæmons dread,
Who still, by myriad ministers
The passive leads but drag the proud
The way predestin'd each must tread.

How should she heed—that stony sphynx—
The tiny flame which lights our years ?
Our puny heart that throbs and bleeds ?

She counts the throbbing of the spheres,—
 The fount of fire that springs and sinks
 From worlds aflame—not us—she heeds.

Ah ! seek no longer with Fate to war !
 Lay passion by, since strife is vain ;
 Who dares his destiny to brave
 Has such reward for all his pain
 As his, who slings against a star,
 Or aims an arrow to wound the wave.

(*ISIAS passes up the Temple steps as NARCISSUS and MELISSA come down them.*)

NARCISSUS :

Melissa, rightly are you honey-named
 For honey-coloured is your amber hair
 And heather-honey-hued your eyes of brown,
 And white as garden honeycomb your arms
 And honey-breathing bosom.

MELISSA :

Ah forbear

Your sugar'd words, lest like a foolish fly,
You drown in honey.

NARCISSUS :

'Tis the death I crave,
My honey-bee ! These flowers are consecrate
To Artemis, but there are blooms enough
Within the groves of Daphne for us two,
For you to gather honey, for me to sip,
Away to Daphne then.

MELISSA :

Away, Away !

(*They pass out LEFT.*)

OPORA.—(*Looking after them*) :

Fair fortune 'fal you, happy youth and maid,
Opora ever was a lover of love !

Pass in a good hour under a lucky star,
 How happy were I but for one short day,
 To be again the girl Melissa is !

SYNOPSIS :

She is but promise, you fulfilment are.

OPERA :

She is the blossom'd branch, and I the tree
 Full-fruited, Autumn sets his seal upon.

LYSIS :

Aye, the sweet fruit of prime maturity
 The Summer sun made perfect.

OPERA :

Nay, our life
 Unlike the tree's, one only Autumn knows,
 Instant on which the dreary Winter waits

That breaks no more to spring-time. Darling
Youth

So little lasting, and so lightly lost
And all too late lamented. Brief, so brief,
A Childhood seeking, and a Youth that finds,
Then Age that still remembers, and regrets.

Theonoe holds for direst tragedy
That Chrestos stands where late Apollo stood
But what the pathos of a passing God,—
Since Gods have pass'd, and Gods may come
again—

Match'd with the tragedy intolerable
Of Woman's fading beauty and of Youth
That passes un-returning.

LYSIS :

None may probe
The pitiful puzzle of our day that hastes
To ambush'd Death who lours and lies in wait,
In vain we strive the problem to forget

Since ever thro' the laughter and the song,
 Through mornings quiet and hush of evening,
 We hear the barking of the insistent Sphynx,
 Inveterate asker, challenging us to guess
 Her irreducible riddle, unanswer'd still.

OPORA :

It is not Death I fear but hateful Age.

LYSIS :

But even Age may happy be, a mind
 At ease and purg'd of passion,—

OPORA.—(*Interrupting him*):

—Aye to men,
 But woman's life with her last lover ends.
 Conceive a may-fly, with a life prolong'd
 Beyond the splendid setting of its sun,
 So late to linger were not, sure, to live ?
 The dark, the dew, for radiant light and heat

That call'd it unto being—Even so,
 Love is a woman's life, a woman's sun,
 And mine slants fast to westward, why to-day
 One only yellowing garland decks my gate,
 Where once there rain'd such blossom, you had
 deem'd
 The Spring astray,—of all the treasur'd sweets
 She bore to deck the world with weary grown—
 Had dropp'd her fragrant burthen at my door.

(Dreamily.)

Ah Youth, Youth, Youth, the delicate days went by,
 Sweet and ephemeral as the year's new wine,
 Falling as soft as drifted petals dropp'd
 From o'er-blown garlands to the lilt o' flutes
 But now, in this uneasy time of change,
 The hour grows late, the faltering harp-string fails,
 The wine runs down to latest, muddy lees.
 As when in dawn-chill'd hall the sleepy slaves
 Expiring lamps extinguish, one by one.

LYSIS :

How one remembers.

OPORA :

How can one forget

The days when Love and Life were bourgeoning,
 Breaking so soon to fragile flower. One day,
 Winter no longer, but the Spring not yet,
 Then thro' a grey night laced with silver showers
 Gliding by green gradations, Spring was here,
 Whelming the world with fragrance, as the guests
 At flowery feasts of the Imperial Fool
 Were drowned in roses by their fitful host.

LYSIS :

(THEONÖE enters during first words of speech,
 RIGHT.)

Aye, youth was pleasant, though we lived too late
 Who never knew the noontide day of Rome.

Our afternoon was bright and warm the hour
Lit by the westering sun, now soon to set.
Winter is hard upon us, and a night
Heavy with cloud, and ominous of storm.
Theonöe, I knew you not so near—

THEONÖE :

I listen'd, for I heard you speak of Rome.
Ah, what a passion of insanity,
Furies more fell than those of Atreus
Beset this poor Tithonus of a world
Which has outliv'd the glory of its prime.
Immortal, Immemorial, Mother Rome,
How can I help but hate your gloomy foes
Who set their little nook of Galilee
Above the Mistress City of the World.
Poor brambles, jealous of the cedar tree,
Beneath whose shade their puny briar sprung.
These weeds wind-borne within our marble fane,
Will work insidious their destructive way

Forcing the fair well-jointed blocks apart,
 Rejoicing in the ruin they have wrought
 As Colonnade and cornice nod and fall.

THEMISTIUS.—(*Looks up from a scroll he is reading*) :

May we not pity their insanity ?
 Whom factious Jews despise, deride, for us
 Were worthy pity.

THEONÖE.—(*Scornfully*) :

Nay, such pity is pityless !
 Pity's for women, not for Gods or men.
 Pity had never piled the pyramid
 Or flung the Colosseon arch so high !
 The great strong wise old world knew not of it,
 Till dawn'd the day of this, her decadence.
 Pity is baleful, like a noxious weed,
 Springing where e'er the Galilean trode,
 Stealthily spreading in the minds of men

To choke the springs of action, bind in turn
 The restless tidal surge of human thought
 And turn it to a fell Sargossa Sea,
 Leaving for clean, clear depth of wave that was,
 —Struck by the sun to living emerald--
 A sickly breathing marsh malarial
 Lit with fantasmal fires of the fen.

LIBANIUS :

And that faint flickering fire they dare oppose
 —These Galileans—to our Helios !
 What say the priests of other mysteries ?
 'Come Clean of heart, and hand, Discreet of tongue.
 Draw nigh Devout, with happy holy awe
 And raise yourself to fellowship with God.
 He stoops not us-ward, we must rise to Him.'
 But their God comes in likeness of a man
 To Sinner sent and witless, not to the Sage
 Of stainless life and purpose.

THEONÖE :

Pardon and truth

Denied to them that soar and seek the Sun,
 Granted to those that in congenial dark
 Batten and creep, a conquest piteous,
 To lose the eagle and to win the worm !
 Ah, Galilean, that were a victory
 More bitter than your vigil of despair,
 Of God forsaken, and by man betray'd,
 The night where blaz'd for sole sinister star
 The traitor's torch of a familiar foe.

LIBANIUS :

How might a God men pity be a God?
 A God that suffer'd were a God that sinn'd
 Letting the World's ways mire his marble feet,
 The World's dust mar the whiteness of his brow.
 Who fram'd th' undying world, himself to die,
 Were past conceiving.

ASCLEPIADES :

Wreathe our God with thorns
 That crown that blossom'd roses on his hair,
 The cup of torment turned to honey wine.
 But leave contending of an alien God,
 And self-tormenting, sad, cadaverous creed,
 Since noontide bids us greet the Father of Light,
 With murmured litany and chanted hymn.

(All enter the Temple.)

THE HYMN.

O sure-aim'd stringer of the golden bow !
 Laying the marsh-bred mist-born Python low.

Archer !

O Priest, interpreting by secret ways
 The ringing tripod's sense, and shaken bays.

Prophet !

O Liberator from degrading pain !
 Faller of the white soul's earth-contracted stain.
 Helios !

O Golden God whose shadow is the Sun !
 Chanting the triumph-song, the Victory won.
 Paian !

(At the end of the hymn some pass out by grille, LEFT. Others assemble about DAMIS and LIBANIUS, who sit on the Temple steps.)

DAMIS :

How wild was last night's intempestive storm,
 The fabrick of the world grows crazy and old,
 Strange stars blaze forth portentous characters
 Drawn on the tablets of the midnight sky
 Threatening menace indecipherable

Beyond Chaldaea's science, or the lore
 Of flame-adoring Zoroastrian.
 Spring is distracted with untimely heats
 And Summer knows unseasonable blight,
 Whilst Earth herself, our nursing mother old
 Grown weary of her swarming progeny
 Quakes town and temple in one ruin down,
 As Ocean quits his wonted bed, to sweep
 Enormous death on Asia's crowded coast.
 Either the Gods are weary of the world
 Or angry with their children.

LIBANIUS :

Pray you, leave
 To Jew and Galilean jealous Gods.
 No angry God may ever work man ill,
 Anger is contrary to the mind Divine,
 But man's misunderstanding of the Gods
 Himself may injure. Souls in fear of God
 Are souls from Him by their own default estrang'd,

Thereby enduring worst of punishment,
 The God is not in need of any man.
 The wise man is in need of God alone.

VOICES :

Fain would I find the God, but He is far,

DAMIS :

Veil'd is the vision that in youth was clear.

AGLAIA :

Where may we seek, how find Him ?

LIBANIUS :

Look within.

For who would single-hearted seek for God
 Fairest and first, may find within himself
 The revelation, where unsoil'd, unvex'd
 By mire of matter, or the storms of time

Sleeps in the still recesses of our soul
A crystal pool of God's own provenance.
Gazing therein,—as stare the sooth-sayers
Within their speaking crystal—first dispel
Discordant voices from the world of sense
Outside, and listen for the inward voice.
Disperse the shadow'd clouds that brood above,—
The shadow of your own imagining—
And wait with half-clos'd eyes the day-spring true.
So, seeking God's illumination, muse
Waiting the vision of beatitude
In brooding silence and a holy calm,
Your spirit steep'd in peace.

(During the speech ASCLEPIADES descends steps behind speaker.)

ASCLEPIADES :

Far more avails
The sage's silence with the Mind Divine

Than praise and sacrifices of the fool,
 Whose hecatomb, whose golden offering
 Is food for flame or Sacrilegious spoil
 For temple robbers.

LIBANIUS :

God is first and last
 Who leads the chorick dancing of the stars
 The planet's progress, as the solar stay,
 And God is Very Beauty, would you win
 To that Diviner essence—count it not
 As Earthly Beauty is to man of earth
 The brief liv'd promise of immediate joy,
 The panting halt before possession prove
 Prelude again to dull satiety.
 The Very Beauty passes not, nor palls,
 But since God's face is mirror'd in His world,
 The best of earthly beauty you may know
 Deep in your soul's shrine reverently set,
 Imperfect image, in a little space,

But still reduction of the master-work
An emanation of the infinite,
And glassing still his great perfection.
Cherish and worship Beauty, till the shrine
Shall grow too frail for the in-dwelling God ;
No longer shall infrequent ecstacy—
More fleet than fancy, swifter than a star
In rapture of its falling self-consum'd—
Like sudden lightning break athwart your night
With baffling brightness, but a Sun Serene
Shall flood your life with radiance. Having stood
With Beauty face to face a moment's span,
Now rapt to heaven and your sister souls,
Granted no more to this less lovely earth,
Bless'd by the brightness of His face serene
Stand you within the light ineffable
Of very Beauty, one and absolute.

*(The listeners melt away one by one, leaving only
THEONÖE, CALLIXENA, and LIBANIUS.)*

THEONÖE :

May then a Soul, grown sick at heart for home
 Languishing here in prison, unloose the chain,
 Draw back the bolt and win to her father-land
 By the low door of Death ?

LIBANIUS :

It may not be.

You know that Soul and Body dwelt apart
 One in the gulf beneath, and one ensky'd,
 Till quicken'd by the universal soul
 What was mere matter takes a body on,
 Since God has bound the Body to the Soul,
 With Time the Soul has learn'd to suffer it,
 As men may suffer a poor hovel's shade,
 Unknowing of a palace waiting them.
 Though Death shall loose the Body from the Soul,
 The Soul from Matter must herself release,
 Yet not precipitately. Travellers,

Too quickly stripping off a tatter'd cloak,
 May leave a treasure hidden in their rags,
 And thus a Soul, too swiftly separate
 From earthly things, missing her starry road,
 Seeks her late lodging in a wild regret—
 Free of the Earth, yet all unfit for Heaven—
 And vainly strives to enter it again.
 Such Spirits haunt the world with wandering lights,
 Or cryings from a solitary place.
 But the True Soul, when called, will pass serene,
 Calmly, augustly, from her late abode,
 And, like a dew-drop, upward to the Sun,
 Exhale, aspire to Him who bade it fall.

THEONÖE.—(*Musingly*) :

And, yet, there have been noble suicides !
 The lotus crown'd divine Antinoüs,
 That last-born lamb in the starry flocks of Heaven.
 Did *he* not well ? Vicarious sufferer,

Drinking the waters of the tawny Nile,
Self-immolated victim, to avert
Impending peril from a darling head.
So would I gladly give for Julian
The unavailing, ineffectual,
And unregarded remnant of my life,
Could but my shorten'd day his day prolong.
But what's a woman's life—a woman's death ?
Libanius, that I had dwelt in Rome !
That beating heart of our Imperial State—
Not here, in lazy, lukewarm Antioch,
Which sets her Chrestus and her Constantine
Above our philosophic Emperor.
Our Hero Julian, yet here I bide,
Heart-sick that I must linger, like a weed,
Not wafted at the wind and water's will,
In trackless tideways of the middle deep,
But where sick waters, neither fresh nor salt,
Churn at the harbour's mouth, among the piles,
Limbo of all unprofitable things.

Still the stream offers, still the waves repel,
The shores off-scouring, scouted of the Sea.

(LIBANIUS *enters the Temple* RIGHT, *leaving THEONÖE*
sunk in thought. FLAVIAN *enters from*
LEFT.)

FLAVIAN :

Dreaming your day-dreams yet, Theonöe,
With not one passing thought for Flavian,
Whose long day loiters heavy with dreams of you,
Of you, the Delian's priestess Sibylline !
Yet, sad you seem for one who serves the Sun,
And apter for the pale Moon's ministry ;
'Twas she that dower'd you with magian spell,
And kissed to paleness all that perfect face,
Wan as the Moon is on a windless night ;
You bear with you a breath from astral space,
As though you fared the wind-swept ways of
Heaven,

Entangl'd in a mazy web of dream,
Familiar with secrets of the sky.

THEONÖE :

Enough for me the earth's strange secrets be,
Perplexing and insoluble, and sad.

FLAVIAN :

The moon's attraction of the strenuous sea
Looks from your eyes, swaying my heart to you
My heart unquiet as the surging tide.

THEONÖE :

I would not sway your heart, rather your mind.

FLAVIAN :

It is my body then that you despise,
My arms too vigorous, my brain too dull?
Then will I sail for Athens even now,

Assume the cloak, the wallet and the staff,
To haunt the Painted Porch and Academe
So I may make me worthier of you.

THEONÖE :

Brother, your body is a living joy,
I love you for your stainless sanity,
And so that ages hence the world may know
What was a gallant Roman at his prime,
I pray some Myron come to earth again
With bronze or marble immortality
To brace your muscles in a strenuous game,
Wrestling, running, heaving high the disk,
Binding the parsley fillet on your brow,
Shedding your smile through centuries to come.

FLAVIAN.—(*Takes her hand*) :

May still you hold me for a froward boy
As you would have me, only bid me be
And love shall teach me likeness to the type.

THEONÖE.—(*Holding both hands to him*):

Ah ! Flavian, I love you sisterly,
But I am Hesper to your Phosphorus
You lead on joyous dawning, I the night.
Your mind is like a wide, a wind swept heath,
Fragrant with thyme, a thrill with skylark song,
But mine most like this sombre Daphne wood,
Here blow pale flowers in the shadow'd glades.
Jonquil and violet, fair narcissus white,
And swooning, heavy headed hyacinth,—
The flower that crys Alas ! for beauty slain,
Under the bays and cypress secular
Where living springs that murmur to the moss
Fed from a fountain flowing from afar
Eternal tears for Daphne dead distil.
And this I have against you that you live
Not for Apollo all, not all for Christ.
Strewing your incense with indifferent hand
To God of Galilean or Hellene.

You do not well, for in these evil days,
At the decisive parting of the paths,
The old unswerving as the Appian way
With firm foundation fixed unfathomably,
The new a devious track thro' bog and fen—
The destinies of our Eternal Rome
Demand a constancy in all we do.

FLAVIAN :

O leave the jargon of conflicting creed,
And hear me when I tell you of my love.
I cannot woo like a philosopher
Weaving you fine-spun specious sophistries,
I only seek to fold you in my arms
And love you as a man. My father's faith
Is nothing to me, all the good I have
I dedicate to you that did inspire
As men may pour to Dionysos wine,

(Kneels to her.)

Or offer roses to the Queen of flowers.
 You are the radiant Goddess of my dreams,
 And I your darkling, desperate devotee
 Kneel in the dark, yet pray towards the light.
 Do you approve my worship ? O my Queen,
 Come you to Athens from these troublous times
 And dwell in peace under the budded bays
 With him whose life were aimless lacking you,
 Rearing fair children maybe, that may serve
 The God with gracious worship, when we twain
 Are dust within one urn.

THEONÖE :

O I rejoice
 To find that Helios with golden bow
 Has chased the gloomy shadow from your brain
 I joy to think you sail for Athens soon,
 To find the dear, the dread Divinities
 Their fair white fanes full-fronting to the dawn.
 Where manly Gods are served by men divine,—

The priest almost the peer of Deity—
With worship reasonable, temperate,
But I must wait as you must wander.

FLAVIAN :

Nay,

O anchor of my life's unstable ship,
You cannot love me if you let me go.

(Kisses the hem of her robe.)

THEONÖE.—*(Lays her hand on his head):*

I love you well enough to leave you, Dear.
Your sun be high in Heaven when mine is set.
What would you do in the eternal night
For whom no day has ever been too long,
Who have the Summer sunshine in your hair,
The morning freshness in your clear blue eyes,
Who blythely to the banquet of your life
Address you, with so keen a zest of it.

Ah, wrestler mine, wherefore, unconquer'd yet,
 Should Death defeat you with a felon fall ?
 Live long and happy, train'd to such true health
 That all excess seem alien as disease.
 In generous emulation of your peers
 Using the good things Gods have given to men
 And winning women worthier of love
 Than I, poor leaf upon the winds of fate.

FLAVIAN.—(*Rising, rushes off LEFT*) :

A laurel leaf for garland of the God,
 Too proud to wreath a merely mortal brow !

(CALLIXENA *enters from Temple RIGHT.*)

CALLIXENA.—(*To THEONÖE*) :

Sibyl, reclaim'd by service of your king
 Assume the choric robe, the crown of bays,
 The wand of budded laurel in your hand
 Sprinkl'd with lustral water of His Spring.

Unfaltering, unflinching pass beyond
 The veil'd prophetic portal, whence the voice
 Of very Truth shall breathe to us by you.

THEONÖE.—(*Folding her hands on her breast*):

Behold I am the handmaid of the God,
 So may I echo His Divine decree
 Unfaltering, unflinching.

CALLIXENA.—(*Leads her away RIGHT as ION comes on
 drawing AGLAIA by the hand. MYRTO
 follows*):

Fortunate

And happy-omen'd may His answer be—

AGLAIA:

This way.

ION.—(*Pointing to the Image of Artemis*):

No, this way, you reclaim a grace,

Here is the Goddess that shall grant your wish,
Our Lady Artemis.

AGLAIA :

The boy is craz'd
Poor child, with over much devotion.
I will indulge him.

ION.—(*Dreamily to himself*):

She commun'd with me,
Last night in vision that was not a dream.
Bending she kissed me, calling me her child,
Promising me that I should be with her
Before her crescent waxed to full of moon.

AGLAIA.—(*Tenderly*):

Ah, gentle Boy, I'll pray a grace of her
I would my dove would wing again to me,
My coral-footed snowy-throated dove,
Whose ruby eyes would mark my home-coming,
Whose croon relieved my labour at the loom.

MYRTO.—(AGLÄIA *looks appealingly at her*) :

The boy is craz'd, I care for none of such,
 I like a limber lad who loves the games
 And did I dwell in pagan darkness still
 'Twere Aphrodite and not Artemis
 From whom I'd beg a favour—very well,
 I would my sea-captain from Ascalon
 No more regarding the Iberian mime
 Who danced the Danæ last new year's tide,
 Would shower his golden rain once more on me.

AGLÄIA :

Mock not the gentle boy, if he be craz'd
 The moon may well his mistress be. Farewell,
 Be happy in your dream, fond nympholept.

(*They go out LEFT.*)

ION.—(*Kneels to the Image*) :

Farewell, and now, O Patroness Divine,

As crown of glory for my dreamy days
 And lonely nights of rapture at your shrine
 From my life's ending, let me wake a star !
 Not in the throng of undistinguish'd lights
 Crowding the stair of that triumphal way,
 Which sweeps straight on to your serene abodes.
 My planet spin through else unlighted space,
 That as I lived on earth, so still in Heaven,
 Your taper-tending watchful minister
 May yet, a little lamp in leagues of light
 Shine to your glory.

(ASCLEPIADES *leads on THEONÖE half-fainting from the Temple.*)

ASCLEPIADES :

So Theonöe,
 Breathe deeply of the fresh free air of Heaven,
 From your distracted dream awakening,
 Shudder you back to anguish'd life again.

THEONÖE (*faintly at first*) :

Ah, well, I know that some disastrous doom
Impends on us, falling or yet to fall,
Since duly rob'd and on the tripod thron'd
The influence awaiting, still there lay
A fear like stone so heavy at my heart
Almost it chok'd the springs of being, until
The trance began to fold me, then came sleep,
Not the old sleep, serene and anodyne,
No blessed influence me seemed, but ambush'd foe
Warily watch'd my weakening, as I swoon'd
Plung'd in the gulf abysmal, memoryless
Save for a haunting horror—I return'd
Flung back to life and sunlight, from the void
Up sweeping, dizzy. Bending over me
I found you, weeping, with Callixena.
What then the sorrowful message that I brought
Returning from my ill-starred embassy,
What answer murmur'd in the merciful sleep,

—Merciful no, else I had never wak'd—
To hear what you must tell me?

ASCLEPIADES :

Thus, the God.

(Reads from a scroll.)

ANSWER OF THE ORACLE.

Faithful, to-day upon the Parthian plain
His mightiest victory doth Julian gain.
This day he doth to Helios restore
The torch which bright, on high thro' life he bore,
Hermes takes back the staff that once he gave
Athene claims the buckler and the glaive,
The Dust the dust reclaims, Fire, the fire,
See skyward like a flame that soul aspire
Granted awhile to earth, His mission done,
Now rapt to presence of the Sovereign Sun,
Who, blest by radiance of Light supreme,
Knows now fulfilment of his life-long dream.

THEONÖE.—(*Wildly*) :

O Julian, your life was like a cup
 For worship or libation master-chas'd,
 Brimming with wine, held upward to the sky
 Golden, and goldener gilded of the sun,
 That now dips down to darkness and the deep,
 Slipp'd from the hold of an uncareful hand
 Lost to this light, and sunken in the sea.

(ASCLEPIADES tries to silence her; failing, he retires
 into the Temple RIGHT.)

(*Addresses the Image of Apollo.*)

And this you suffer, O Effeminate God,
 In chorick garment woman-like arrayed !
 By your own music's beauty rapt and whelm'd,
 Your lips half-parted, softly in a sigh,
 Tranc'd by the passion of your lonely lyre,
 Sole with your song within a world of dream
 Where wakes alone your melody, and you !

(The confused noise and tramping of the mob is heard outside.)

VOICES OUTSIDE :

God shall put down the mighty from his seat,
Exalting humble men, and meek of heart.

THEONÖE.—*(Closes the grille and speaks through it):*

Humble and meek of heart, O hypocrites,
Cowardice, rancour, your humility,
Who by your slanders blacken what was clear
With inky venom, as the sepia fish
To take a prey, to shelter from a foe,
Darkens the water. So you pride condemn?
The noble pride that draws man up to God
Raising himself since God stoops not to him,
Nay then, arraign the lion for his strength,
The hawk, bold pirate of the upper blue
For swiftness, and the tortoise for his sloth.

Indict the emmett for her industry,
 Impugn the cricket's gay improvidence,
 The fox's craft, the lamb's simplicity,
 But leave to man the passion of that pride
 Which sets him, sole among Creation's Sons
 Feet in the dust, and forehead in the stars
 To stand erect, and gaze upon the sky.

(THEONÖE *stands speaking thro' the grille, her back to the audience.*)

VOICES OUTSIDE :

Curséd be they that worship graven Gods
 Who boast themselves in Idols

Babylas,

Purge them with fire, Blesséd Babylas,
 Death to the Pagans, burn them out like rats
 Which scurried from Serapis' image late
 When his great idol to our axes fell.
 Ah, soon shall a last supreme burn'd offering—

A huger hecatomb than Julian's
 Insensate sacrifice of snow white bulls—
 From his last altar to Apollo flame,
 Soon shall Himself, his temple, and his grove
 Go up in fire.

(CALLIXENA *hurries down steps* RIGHT *with ION*
clinging to her mantle.)

Torches, torches, lights.

CALLIXENA :

Ion, the troopers tarry still to come.
 These Galileans, factious and turbulent,
 Sudden and fierce as Phyrminos in flood,
 Threaten the shrine of Helios himself,

(*Ion climbs over wall* CENTRE.)

So gliding by the hidden postern door
 Fleet under shadow of the cedar trees
 Along the line of Trajan's aqueduct,
 And give the alarm in Antioch.

VOICES OUTSIDE :

Torches, fire !

But stay that devil's brat who slips away
 To call the soldiers from the guard-house up.
 He doubles like a hare, stones, stones and staves.
 A hit, a hit !

Ah, would you ?

Head him off.

THEONÖE :

Shame on you, spare him, he is but a child.

VOICES :

A wolf cub can but grow into a wolf,
 Better to take him ere his fangs be grown.
 —He bleeds, he bleeds—trample him underfoot,—
 —There, there, take that from blessed Babylas
 To Artemis, your demon patroness,—
 Enough, enough, a fine day's work is here,
 There boy, get up.—

THEONÖE :

How white and still he lies,
Beyond the outrage of ill words and deeds.

VOICES :

Bind you your kerchief round about his brow,
Lay him upon the steps and come away,
Make our report unto the Governor.

(ASCLEPIADES, LIBANIUS and CALLIXENA, with
pilgrims, open the grille. CALLIXENA carries
ION to mid stage, and lays him at the feet of
ARTEMIS' image.)

CALLIXENA.—(*Holding up her hand to the Image*):

Thou Regent of the darkness and the light,
Queen of the Earth and Swayer of the Sea,
Sovereign of the full four-season'd year,
Sister and spouse of the all-governing Sun.
Goddess and guardian of Incarnate Truth,

We lay thy little servant at thy feet,
Knowing him safe with thee.

ION.—(*In a low voice*):

. . . . To be with her
Before her crescent wax to full of moon,
She promis'd it, and she her promise keeps.
Goddess, my Lady, all the pain is past,
I never knew my mother, but you lean
Over me, motherly, hushing me to sleep.
Good-night, good rest, good fortune.

(*Dies.*)

CALLIXENA.—(*Covers his face*):

Gentle boy,
Your life, all service, all devotion,
You liv'd so near the Gods, but little space
You need to travel 'ere you be with them.

MYSTA.—(*Touches his hand*):

Folding his frail hands for the workless night,
Lo, he has breath'd his life out, with a smile.

THEONÖE.—(*Throwing herself on to the body of Ion*):

Ah, tarry, tarry, Ion, wait for me,
Who weary of this strange bewild'ring world ;
You have escap'd from prison and shall I stay.

(*Rises.*)

Ion is dead, and Julian is dead,
Ion has flitted, moth-like, from the world,
And Julian, disdainful of the dust
That men call Empire, gold, or power here,
Wings in a strong flight up the burning blue,
A Roman eagle hungry for the sky
To gaze for ever on the Sovereign Sun.
Their goal the Sun and Moon, but what were
mine ?

The pale penumbra of some twilight star,
 Where a nepenthes Earth has never grown
 May give me solace of a lasting sleep.
 For them the door has open'd, now for me !

(Stands erect on steps RIGHT with arms extended.)

Ah, weep not faithful as for funeral
 But rather raise a rapturous nuptial song.
 Robe me companions, robe me as a bride,
 Wreathe me with myrtle, for the bridegroom waits.
 Let all Sabaea in the censer smoke
 And myriad roses strew the path for me !
 As from this world of Beauty dispossess'd
 —My last of song's my sweetest,—I shall pass,
 The Swan's way, like the lyric Lesbian
 Who could not mate her dream and her desire.
 Though every song and sacrifice shall cease
 A victim self-devoted shall not fail
 To-day, upon thy Altar, Helios,
 So let me cease in passionate extasy !

(*Stabs herself.*)

(*The women close round supporting her and lay her on steps RIGHT.*)

MYSTA :

Silent the Sibyl, seal'd the speaking spring.

THEONÖE (*faintly*):

Sibyl no longer, but a woman now,
I drink no more the spring Oracular,
Engarlanded with the prophetic bay,

(FLAVIAN *enters during speech from LEFT with a sword in his hand. He moves as if stunned towards THEONÖE.*)

No more a slave constrained of my King,
Death manumits me from my monarch now,
Who held my soul in thrall, but not my heart.
For careless am I that to-morrow's Sun

Shall find in Daphne, the last sibyl dead

(THEONÖE *holds out her hand to FLAVIAN.*)

And dried the sources of the silenc'd spring
Since all my sorrow is to part with you.

FLAVIAN.—(*Bends over her*) :

You are a woman then, I deem'd divine !

THEONÖE :

I am a mortal, to mortality
Vowed and devoted.

FLAVIAN :

Nay, you must not die.

The God must save his virgin votaress.

THEONÖE :

The God will work no miracle for me.

He knows that flame which on his altar burn'd,

Pales in the fire of your warm human love,
 And did I live,—but it is best to die
 Since Life has grown too fair, the God too far.

FLAVIAN.—(*Kneels on one knee beside her*):

Halcyon fleeing from the imminent storm
 Linger a little to conjure the sea,
 And either bless me with thy love, and live,
 Or, if thou must die, rather hating me
 Than loving, leave me, else thou dost bequeathe
 Undying, soul-dissolving vain regret.
 Since still there lies less poignant break-of-heart,
 In ‘never could be’ than in ‘might have been’ !

THEONÖE :

I laid aside my lamp to seek a star
 That burns estrangéd, out of my poor reach,
 And now, too late, I would my lamp relume—
 The lamp I scorn’d of happy human love,
 Which best can light our darkness.

MYSTA.—(*To the women*):

Of her life

The torch burns thin and shaken, like a flame
Toss'd in the winds of adverse destiny.

THEONOE.—(*Softly, but clearly*):

I dream'd my life away. I live but now.
 One instant waking, as eternal night
 Is closing in upon me, soft as sleep.

(*Passionately to FLAVIAN.*)

Come, mouth of mortal, consecrate my lips
 Anew, to Aphrodite, from my brow
 Lay by the laurel, crown me with a kiss,
 And set a withering rose upon my hair,
 A rose that should have flower'd a brief day thro'
 Whose bloom was shed or ever the noon tide came,
 Who dies as I die, victim to the Sun.

FLAVIAN:

Burn out, false Sun, extinguishing the day !

Or blaze so brightly that you light the world
 As pyre for her, your priestess and my bride,
 Who gave you service, aye, who leaves me love !

DAPHNE.—(*To FLAVIAN*) :

Dear, had we only known one perfect hour !
 Better than long year of the barren bay,
 Or bitter laurel's bloomless death-in-life
 To have lain one hour a rose upon your breast !
 A white rose on my love's heart withering
 Render you up my sweets, then droop and die
 Content that I had grac'd your life one hour !

ASCLEPIADES.—(*To the people*) :

Not yet departing that white bird her soul,
 —The cage confining her but just unclos'd,
 The sky still strange to her, so late enlarg'd,—
 Flutters a moment in the open door,

Pausing a space 'ere she take wing for heaven.

THEONÖE.—(*With a little laugh*) :

Ion hath hid himself so safe away
 I cannot find him, he would frighten me
 Thinking him lost, but well I know at home
 The first return'd he waits to welcome me.

LIBANIUS.—(*Standing over her*) :

Lay by your body, like a faltering flute
 That marr'd the fuller music of your song.
 More fortunate than other mortals, you !
 Their voice still breaks upon a soaring note,
 Rapture of triumph, passion of despair.
 Your sweet life, swooning to a perfect pause
 Sweeps on a mode serene and gradual
 To the propos'd inevitable chord
 Closing the full, completed symphony.

THEONÖE.—(*Very softly*) :

The Sun sets early, it is very dark.

(*Dies.*)

FLAVIAN.—(*Prostrate, with face hidden in her robe*) :

How, dark for you? What then for those you leave?
 A shadowing sorrow that obscures the Sun,
 A night that never shall break to dawn again.

ASCLEPIADES.—(*Stands on the highest step, above the body of THEONÖE, which he touches with a branch of laurel*) :

Fleet you, sweet Spirit, on your star-ward way!
 Pass to the presence of King Helios
 Leaving your lovely body, myrrhine vase,
 Whence has escap'd the essence volatile,
 The attar of your world-perfuming days,
 Exhaléd from the crystal continent,

Too frail for service in this wastrel world
Where Time and Chance are careless servitors.

(*All raise their hands in prayer. The women strew flowers on THEONÖE.*)

VOICES OUTSIDE :

He hath put down the mighty from his seat.
Julian is fallen and the old Gods dead.



CYTHERA.



CYTHERA.

PERSONAGES OF THE PLAY.

COLETTE	-	-	-	-	<i>Young Girls.</i>
SYLVIE	-	-	-	-	
HOU-CHE	-	-	-	-	<i>A Chinese Girl.</i>
OMBRAGE	-	-	-	-	<i>A Young Poet.</i>
CASSANDRE	-	-	-	-	<i>An Old Peasant.</i>
SOPHRON	-	-	-	-	<i>A Philosopher.</i>
YVES					
AMIS	-	-	-	-	<i>Young Artists.</i>
GASPARD	-	-	-	-	
CELADON					
ANTONY	-	-	-	-	<i>A Boy.</i>
FATHER BERNARDINE	-	-	-	-	<i>An Aged Priest.</i>
PEREGRINA	-	-	-	-	<i>A Stranger Lady.</i>
HERMES	-	-	-	-	<i>Her Companion.</i>

Courtiers, Ladies, Children, and Musicians.

PERIOD.—THE EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

The action takes place in a glade of tall old trees just touch'd by Autumn. To the LEFT is a garden—architecture, baluster, and slowly dropping fountain. Thro' a clearing to the RIGHT a blue lagoon melts into a background of misty peaks, and the gilded masts and half-furl'd rainbow sails of an otherwise unseen galley appear.

The Farandôle sweeps down and across the glade from RIGHT to LEFT.

THE FARANDÔLE.

We'll to the woods no more, lopp'd is the laurel now,

The glory gay despoil'd, and leafless every bough !
The fair crowns cut away, that grew so green before,

Passionate pilgrims pass, we'll to the woods no more !

We'll to the woods no more, the green glades nymph bereft

In order'd columns fall, like swathe by scythes-
man left

The woodland shrine is fell'd, we lov'd so well of
yore,

Poor pilgrims dis-possess'd, we'll to the woods no
more.

Ah fall'n, fall'n low, the pillars of our fane !
 Whose leaf-enwoven walls may rise no more again.
 From high pil'd roof of boughs, from shadow-
 dappl'd floor,
 Passionate pilgrims pass ! We'll to the woods no
 more !

OMBRAJE.—(*Looking after the dancers*) :

Passionate pilgrims, so your passions pass,
 I deem'd the laurel would outlast your loves,
 The bay grow greenly yet when you were grey,
 But they have fall'n and your loves abide,
 Light loves as little lasting as the leaves
 Renew'd each spring-tide, aye, and better so,
 Since fleeting love is like the wayside well
 You drink of, passing, but enduring love
 Is bitter and unfathomable, salt as brine,
 Mysterious as an unsounded sea.

(SYLVIE *appears LEFT and listens a moment.*.)

SYLVIE :

What do you murmur, moody wanderer ?
Watching the dancers with a jaundic'd eye !
Is nothing lovely in this gay green world ?

OMBRAGE :

Much that is lovely, little to be lov'd,
Friends who are fickle, women who are false
And planets unpropitious.

SYLVIE :

O, have done,
You are the world's eternal malcontent,
You nurse a grudge 'gainst all humanity !
Your sensibility's so exquisite,
The Zephyr seems to you a boreal blast,
The Summer sunshine not to be endur'd.

Methinks had you the power, you would call
 Some all-annihilating ruin down
 Upon this old earth. When the bearded star
 Last Autumn seem'd to threat the beechen woods
 So low it hung, so fiery-menacing,
 I'd watch you gaze on it as tho' you pray'd
 Some conflagration hasten on the day
 Supreme when Earth, dismasted, derelict,
 Shall roll thro' space her all-dispeopled hull
 Drifting, abandon'd on the tide of stars
 To split in shatter'd wrack athwart the prow
 Of some huge planet's hostile oncoming.
 What is it that you lack, that you lament,
 What makes you go so sadly, in the sun ?

OMBRAJE :

I seek a beauty Earth has not to give,
 And I am tangl'd in as curs'd a web
 As ever the weaving sisters wrought awry.

SYLVIE :

I wish you clearer vision, and sunnier mind,
 What seek you fairer than this glade of ours,
 Where the Court ladies with their gallants dance,
 And like a butterfly the Eastern girl
 The Jesuits sent from China for the Queen,
 Flutters and poises, while the rippl'd lake
 Glimmers in sunlit silver thro' the green.

OMBRAGE :

So you perceive it, thus to me appears
 This—to your vision—so enchanted glade,
 Trees heavy foliag'd and soon to fall,
 Too old to stand for many winters more
 Against the melancholy of a lake
 Whence fever wakes at starset, and a sward
 Where ladies over-ripe and listless swains,
 —These young too long, and these too early
 old—

Exchange their vows and murmur'd madrigal
 With lip-devotion from the heart afar,
 With words of flame that melt not lips that
 freeze,
 In faded light of yellow afternoon
 They drowse their disillusion with a dance,
 Subduing sorrow to a saraband,
 Attuning madness to the minuet
 And passion to the pavane,

(To the dancers.)

While you may,
 O silken shepherd of the gilded crook,
 And masquerading satin shepherdess
 —Your single lamb perfum'd with bergamot,—
 Play your brocaded pastoral ! play on
 Your comedy of mimic love and hate,
 With trivial interlude of muted strings
 Or far-off winding of a huntsman's horn.
 Soon the long-brooding thunderstorm shall break

Crashing athwart your dainty passionless play,
 As when there peals the solemn organ-blast
 Sonorous, of the deep Autumnal wind—
 Dirge of cicala and of butterfly—
 Drowning the languid songs of Summertide !

(SYLVIE *retires up stage, shrugging her shoulders.*

During OMBRAGE's song HOU-CHE approaches him.)

STAR-GAZER'S SONG.

OMBRAGE.—(*Sings*) :

Star-stricken-constellation-cross'd
 I call to the clear unanswering sky,
 'Where lurks my foe, inimical stars ?
 Silver Procyon, ruby Mars ?
 A gem of the glittering galaxy ?'

Was it Aldeboran's rusted gold
 Mis-rul'd my wayward destiny ?
 Whose was the influence malign ?
 Emerald Altair, was't thine ?
 Thine leaden Saturn, heavy and old ?
 Or Opaline Algol's evil eye ?

HOU-CHE.—(*To OMBRAGE*):

You count yourself star-stricken, what of me ?
 The Weaving Sisters wrought me webs of woe,
 The Oxen trod me underfoot, the Sieve
 Sav'd me the sorrow, letting 'scape the joy.
 The Watery Stars dropp'd rain of tears on me,
 The northward pointing Dipper never pour'd
 Me draught of gladness, only wine of myrrh.
 My Father of a hundred cars was Lord,
 His sway extending to the four far seas
 And when he slept in pretious jade in-urn'd

My brother chose his bed in flowers to make
 And lay him down beneath the willow tree,
 Till driv'n from rule by a familiar foe
 He drank of dragon's blood, and ended all.
 Then was I sold to an Ambassador,
 And overseas, a slave, in alien court
 I please your princes with my strange array
 An exile, in a foreign land, en'slav'd,
 Sure there are many more ill-starr'd than you.

(HOU-CHE *retires* LEFT. FATHER BERNARDINE and
 SOPHRON *enter from BACK in conversation.*.)

FATHER BERNARDINE :

Surely the Golden Age rolls round again,
 Since this fair summer came to bless our shore,
 Each day brings a fresh wonder to the birth,
 Or turns some wonted beauty fairer still
 More meekly musical these crooning doves

More iris-hued their neck, more coralline
 The little feet that follow where she goes,
 This Stranger-Lady, pilgrim from the sea,
 Around whose galley, day-long, dolphins play !

SOPHRON :

Aye, sea-gulls who at starest winter-tide
 Still shun the inland neighbourhood of man,
 Come idly circling all the noonday through,
 And shake with wings aslant the rose-leaves
 down

Upon their Siren-Mistress !

FATHER BERNARDINE :

The lagoon

Warmer and bluer growing at every tide
 Bears from the open ocean to our shore
 A sand more silver, amber and ambergris.
 Treasure of rosy-hued or emerald weed,
 Dyed with intenser colour, fairer shells

Than I had thought our cold sea held in store,
 But sure some genial influence abroad
 Breathes from the deep or showers from on high,
 For on the gray wall of our abbey grange
 An old vine droops, tho' trebly secular
 With weight of grapes beyond man's memory,
 And as gold day turns silver evening
 We mark, rose-flaming in a violet sky
 The planet Hesper burn as bright, as clear
 As wedding torch of epithalamy
 Lit for this old world's spousal with a star !

(FATHER BERNARDINE and SOPHRON *pass out LEFT.*)

(*Enter COLETTE, SYLVIE, and YOUNG MEN.*)

COLETTE :

Here let us rest, one cannot dance all day !
 Our farandôle is finish'd, soon the Court
 Will tread their study'd stately minuet,
 Pacing and pausing as the cadence falls.

SYLVIE :

Bring me a draught from yonder brimming urn
 A drowsy river-nymph lets lean, and drip,
 Just now it were as welcome as a cup
 Drawn from the faëry people's wishing-well,
 'The well in the wood, where the dearest dream
 comes true'
 Our grandames, spinning, us'd to sing us of.

COLETTE :

I had forgotten the strange old spinning song.
 'The well in the wood, where the dearest dream
 comes true,
 The wood where grows the herb of Heart-
 content,
 O'er which the trusting youth or maiden, bent,
 Finds dream-fulfilment, aye, and Hearts'-ease
 too !'
 That's but the burthen, I forget the song !

YVES :

I fear that well ran dry long years ago,
 But far in the beechen wood the sources spring
 Which feed this fountain, think to your content,
 This is the true well's water, drink and dream
 And waking have your wish !

ALL :

The cup, the cup !

AMIS :

If that be all, drink you at any spring,
 'Twill serve your purpose, act but steadfastly,
 Waste no while wishing, will and dare and do !
 The dream-sick soul is barren, the virile mind
 Begets and brings his purpose to the birth,
 Moulding the plastic forces of his life
 That way or this as bids a strenuous will.
 So dare to live your poem and your play
 Nor keep distinct the deed and the desire,
 The act's anticipation, and the act !

CELADON :

If we had found the woodland wishing-well,
What would you wish for ?

AMIS :

What does youth and prime
And old age wish for, Very Beauty.

SOPHRON :

Aye !
But what is Very Beauty, seeking which
Sculptor, painter, and poet have differing aims,
Young Anthony still scribbles in his book
Whilst Yves the Sonnet's sequence still pursues,
Yet each is longing for and seeking—what ?
And where to find it, that we all would know.

GASPARD :

Maybe that I can tell you, there are days
When Nature seems so near to us, so kind,

So comprehending, you might almost deem
 All Earth were standing tiptoe, in a hush
 Breathless, expectant of some spoken word
 Breath'd from the sky or whisper'd from the sea
 A spell to heal the hurt of the wounded world,
 To win discordant stars to tune again.
 So must we dwell with Nature till the hour
 When she reveal her secret !

AMIS :

Art for me !

For art is nature better'd.

GASPARD :

Say you so ?

AMIS :

Nature is like the ever-flowing spring
 Running to waste at whiles, and breaking bounds,
 Art is the wilful water canaliz'd,

Stor'd for refreshment and for pleasure baths
Breaking in fountains to delight the eye.
Since Beauty dwell alone in mind of man
Nature knows not that she is beautiful,
And those ideas which all confusédly
And all obscurely Nature may present
Art orders, varys, harmonizes, clears.

SOPHRON :

How, then, define your beauty—what it is?

GASPARD :

Diversity reduc'd to unity,
The multiple made simple.

AMIS :

Nay, for me,
A certain consonance of things diverse.

CELADON :

The outcome of an order'd energy,
Contrast and correspondence.

YVES :

Symmetry,
Variety, or regularity.

SOPHRON :

You seem but ill-agreed, and I affirm
That art of Sculptor, Painter, Poet, Bard
Is Charm and Pleasure, never Strength and Life.
Truth is the only living Beauty. You
Who prate of Very Beauty Visible,
You seem—at least to us Philosophers—
Most like to children playing on the shore
To one who has explor'd the middle sea,
The sunless depth where groves unearthly wave,
Of giant weed and growth unfathomable.
Who, safe escap'd the dreadful Remora

And clasping polyp, comes to shore again,
 Breathing a deep draught of the living air,
 Shaking the tangled weed from breast and brow,
 To find his deeds of deep discovery
 Discounted and disputed, travers'd, weigh'd,
 As false or true, by forward babbling boys
 Who guage the dim recesses of the deep
 By ankle-deep exploring of the bay !
 Truth is a pearl that lies in the deep sea
 A snowy peak that towers overhead,
 Your 'Beauty's' but a mocking mirage !

OMBRAGE :

Aye,

But we who on the desert border dwell
 Prefer the mirage to the wilderness,
 The imag'd waters to the barren sands,
 We know that brackish springs for us must
 serve
 We seek no draught of water from that lake,

Yet love its very unreality,
 Catching a fancy'd coolness from its blue,
 A feign'd refreshment from its waving palms,
 Content, so that it veil the burning sand
 That rings us round about, inevitably.

YVES.—(*To SOPHRON*) :

And since you say that unattainable
 Your Truth, that is the only Beauty dwells
 Thron'd on a high crag, out of reach, afar,
 Past waters ferryless, unfordable,
 Unnavigable lakes and bridgeless streams,
 How know you but that some delusive mist
 Colour the sheer peak to a lovely hue,
 A black rock masquing in a painted veil,
 Unlovely, barren ?

CELADON :

Fairer, better far
 Than sterile Truth, a fertile Fantasy !
 A lovely dream than dun reality !

FATHER BERNARDINE :

Let be, let be, to all who love her well
Still Beauty speaks a universal tongue
Unknowing strife of Babel-jargoning,
And Art can make you from your servitude
Of task unlovely, uncongenial toil,
Free citizens of dear Callipolis
The Soul's ideal city ! Never deem
That Beauty is a thing remote, ensky'd
Outside our daily being, think her not
A parasite upon the Tree of Life,
But that fair bough's supremest blossoming.
Essential Beauty mortals never know
But Nature's beauty, its reflection,
Partaker in it, but by matter marr'd
The fair face mirror'd in a metal dim.
Still when very Beauty comes to birth
Led of a legend, steering by a star,
The world's Wise Men set forth on pilgrimage,
And if they find it they are bless'd indeed,

And if they seek it still, and never find
Yet are they bless'd in seeking, till life's end,
When, as we hope, the very Beauty's self
May in a distant country smile on each
Who thought, who sought, who wrought,
Who fought for her !

(FATHER BERNARDINE *retires up stage.* COLETTE
and GILLES pass to front of stage from LEFT.)

COLETTE :

Have you then nothing you would say to me?
Each day's the same, we wander hand in hand
You never tell me that my eyes are blue
Nor mark the 'sunshine captive in my hair,'
That is what someone tells me—you are dumb,
Yet once you used to say you loved me, lost
You seem, by daylight, blinking like an owl
Who waits for sunset.

GILLES :

Aye, the Moon for me !
 For I am of the lunar brotherhood.
 She gazed upon us in our cradle-sleep
 And with her whiteness all our cheeks grew pale
 Our wild eyes open'd wider, wondering,
 Are glaucous as the grey moon-glassing sea,
 Minions we of the fantastick Moon
 Who sways her wistful wayward votaries,
 And dowers them with kinship to the tides,
 With wills that shift like reefs of quaking sand,
 With fitful calm and fickle energy.
 Our wits unstable wax and wane with Her !

COLETTE :

Fantastick truly the Moon's minions,
 Who leave the world that roars beside their gate
 To listen in an echo-breathing shell
 How murmur dreamy memories of the sea.
 Who mourn the bud when full the blossom blows

The blossom as the fruit succeeds the flower,
 And, all too late, the fruit when boughs are bare !
 Who, when they should be doing dream so late
 They sleep the clock round, wilder'd with false
 fires,
 Waking, deem sunset sunrise, dusk the dawn,
 The star of evening the morning star.
 Fantastick truly is the moonstruck crew !

GILLES :

But when we leave this uncongenial earth,
 Then is our guerdon, then our great reward,
 Departing, happy, the luminous path we take
 Where melts the mirror'd brightness of our
 star
 Reticulate in silver on the sea,
 And happy, follow the green and silver way
 Up to the regent of our lunacy,
 Our Goddess, Mistress, Queen and Mother Moon.

COLETTE :

Mock me no more with moonshine promises
 Go and be happy with a moon-maiden !

(COLETTE *and* GILLES *go off* RIGHT *and* LEFT.)

SYLVIE *and* CASSANDRE *enter from BACK.*)

SYLVIE :

Again I tell you, only for the child
 And for the sake of Ysabeau, my friend
 Who left her baby motherless, for them
 I may consent to marry you, but now
 We'll talk no more of it, I'll rest me here,
 They spoke of Beauty but a while ago.

CASSANDRE :

You think too much of Beauty, 'tis a thing
 Outside of our existence, which beseems
 Great churches or the palaces of Kings
 But has no place within a cottage door,

For poor folks Beauty is utility,
 And fitness, home-spun habit and grogram gown.
 Care for the woven web and plenishing gear
 And healthful labour shall be your concern,
 With no fantastick care for Beauty.

SYLVIE :

Nay,

You will not chide me, leaning at the loom,
 If from the lattice I may gaze at whiles
 Upon the giant pear-tree at your door,
 I us'd to dream the fairies lov'd the tree
 And I would garland it each holyday,
 At dawn and twilight it would whisper me
 A message from the fairies.—

CASSANDRE :

Ah, the pear,
 With all its bounteous blossom, it fruited ill,
 I fell'd it lately, grubb'd the root away,

And turn'd its place into the cabbage garth.
It may not murmur to you any more
Of fairies dancing under the cold blue moon
But whisper you of hearth-warm sanctities,
And fireside duty, and the cares of home,
Gilding our pewter as the log flames high.

SYLVIE :

Fell'd the old pear tree, silver in the moon ?
That shower'd each springtime down its scented
snow
Which melted not on brow or bosom, nay,
You should have ask'd me 'ere you fell'd the tree
That was my childhood's glory, and the grace
Of that poor cottage ; O, I thought to take
Your dead wife's place, because I lov'd her child,
But now I see you'll never understand
One mood of mine, and I should sit and hear
A voice that cry'd at midnight by the door,
A footfall lingering, loth to leave the place

Where late she rul'd her household, I should feel
 A sighing presence as the log burn'd low,
 And mark a gray shade bend a moment's space
 To bless—if ghost may bless—the cradled babe,
 The mother left behind her, friend farewell,
 Seek a bride elsewhere, I am not for you !

CASSANDRE :

Here is a pretty coil about a tree !

(*PEREGRINA's song is heard in the distance. After first verse she appears down CENTRE with HERMES.*)

PEREGRINA'S SONG.

Far, very far, steer by my star,
 Leaving the loud world's 'wilderling clamour,
 In the mid-sea waits you maybe
 The isle of glamour where Beauty reigns

From coasts of commerce and myriad-marted
 Towns of traffic by wide seas parted,
 Past shoals unmapp'd and by reefs uncharted
 The single-hearted my isle attains !

Under a sky cloudless and high,
 The blue sea's pearl and the green world's wonder
 Dreams thro' her day by that fair bay
 Where no waves thunder, where no winds veer,
 No friends forgetful, for hearts remember
 When no change mars and no years dismember,
 Where the flame sinks never to ashen ember
 Where no December deflowers the year.

Each soul may find faith to her mind,
 Seek you the peace of the groves Elysian,
 Or the ivy twine and the wands of vine,
 The Dionysian, Orphic rite ?

To share the joy of the Mænad's leaping
In frenzy'd train thro' the dusk glen sweeping
The dew-drench'd dance, and the star-watch'd
 sleeping,
Or temple-keeping, in Vestal white ?

Ye who regret suns that have set
Lo, each God of the ages golden
Here is enshrin'd, ageless and kind,
 Unbeholden the dark years through.
Their faithful oracles yet bestowing
By laurel's whisper and clear stream's flowing
Or the leafy stir of the Gods own going
 In oak-trees blowing may answer you !

In my fair land perfected stand
What artist's dreaming and poet's leisure
Only in thought fashion'd and wrought
 For very pleasure, for Beauty's sake.

The bronze cast fair to the heart's desire,
 The sweet song fashion'd of tears and fire
 No languid string and no jarring wire,
 Where no hands tire, no voices break !

YVES :

Thank you, sweet Lady, for your silver song
 We at the noon of this sweet Summer's day
 Told of our aspirations and desires,
 And you have wound them in a melody
 And show'd us there the Beauty that we crav'd
 And fairer than we deem'd it.

PEREGRINA :

So young sir,
 Men still love Beauty ?

YVES :

Ease and wealth and power
 Men for the most part follow, but a few,

And those few young men very Beauty seek.
 That seems the tragedy of growing old,
 To lose the dear ideal you saw and sought
 With happy fever all your April days,
 Renounce your dream and sit contented down
 To beef and broth, ambrosia all forgot !

PEREGRINA :

Yet here is a happy boy who dreams awake,
 What is your name, who lean upon your book,
 And so intently scan the festal scene,
 Drawing the dancers in their shadowy glade ?

ANTONY :

My name is Antony.

PEREGRINA :

Ah, once I knew
 An Antony who lost the world for love,
 As you for Beauty you shall still pursue,

A Beauty subtler, more evasive yet,
A vision fainter, fairer, farther still
Than ever your eye may mark, your hand
translate !

That fleeting vision seeking, you shall know
The soul of Sorrow in the guise of Joy,
The sob that breaks thro' all the lilt of lutes,
Madness of Mirth that turns to tears so soon,
And still the shadowy sighing in the song !
Not the green rapture of the riotous Spring
Shall sway your brooding fancy, not the noon,
But Autumn's tenderer, more regretful tone,
The strange sea-green of skys crepuscular,
The bitter even-scent of box and bay,
The glimmering whiteness of the garden gods,
Thro' earlier falling dusk of the yellowing year,
These most shall match your mood, when sunset
brings

The violet sky holding one hopeless star,
The tragic dusk that deepens to despair !

FATHER BERNARDINE :

He is a strange child, for he will not play
 With other urchins, racing, or at ball.
 His pencil never absent from his hand
 As tho' he fear'd that night would fall too soon,
 He'll watch the fountains all an Autumn day,
 Mount and descend against the sky serene,
 Until the gloaming deepen thro' the glade.

PEREGRINA :

His hand shall falter and his purpose fail
 Attainment, as the sky-aspiring jets
 Of frustrate fountains falling back in spray
 Sink sighing to their marble basin's pen,
 Missing the goal they strove for, with a sob
 To find the stars so unattainable.
 Still seeking very Beauty, as a moth
 Flitting across a hall of festal lights
 May feverishly beat a little hour

Against an alabaster-guarded lamp,
Craving the flame, in passionate impotence,
Vainly, and passing leave for only trace
The delicate dusk that deck'd a downy wing,
—So evanescent, so ephemeral—
Out of the dark emerging, into the dark
Returning.

FATHER BERNARDINE :

Let him only love the light,
And seek it earnestly, all will be well !

PEREGRINA :

Who is this gentle, placid, kind old man
Whose long white locks frame so serene a face ?

OMBRAGE :

He is our good priest, Father Bernardine.

PEREGRINA :

So there are priests yet, servants of what Gods ?
 Is this a priestess this so rainbow-hued,
 Like some bright Eastern bird ?

HOU-CHE :

No Lady, no !

Incense I burn no more to any Gods,
 Mine own forsook me, and the new are strange,
 But you, O mistress, I would choose to serve
 Likest a lady on a lotus set
 Out Goddess of all Beauty and all Love
 Who smil'd on me 'neath favourabler skys.
 And I believe you come from far away
 From some more happy to this sadder star !

PEREGRINA :

To me as unto you their Gods are strange,
 For, in the temples I was us'd to know,
 Inscrutable and immemorial,

Clad in their strict and all-encincturing
 Close-pleated vesture hieratical
 The old Gods sate and watch'd the world go by.
 Their writhen mouth and long-drawn dreaming
 eyes

Frozen to smiling immobility,
 Their calm brows set in vague unearthly gaze
 Contemplative of unimagin'd space,
 Looking beyond the incense and the lights,
 Impassive of the pains, the pray'rs of men !

HOU-CHE :

Sought or unsought still the old Gods endure !
 Near to my home, the other side the world,
 A God awaits his vanish'd worshippers,
 Deep in the still recesses of a wood
 Where once a mighty city teem'd with men
 A myriad fires smok'd, a thousand bells
 Called from the temples years and years along !
 Temple and town have pass'd to nothingness,

But still among the cedars secular,
 Deep in the dim wood still the sun salutes
 The musing golden God who agelessly,
 —Breathing no incense but the pillar'd pines—
 Deathlessly dreams the lagging years away.

PEREGRINA :

Alas, no more thro' dewy underwoods
 Do Dionysos frenzy'd worshippers—
 Dight in the dappl'd vesture of a fawn,
 These rosy-hued thro' Coan garment seen,
 These frankly white but for their ivy-crown,
 These wreathing verdant clusters of the vine,
 Purple and amber twined with trailing green,—
 With clash of cymbal and with sobbing flute
 Divide the darkness with opposing song
 Of rousing rapture, or a low lament ;
 But now you serve some stern ascetic God,
 You seem to count it shame that a form be fair,
 And muffle you like vestals !

HERMES :

Nakedness

In the palaistra or among the vines
 Bathed of the dew, and sunshine-sanctified,
 Was God-like once that Beast-like is to-day !
 All innocent joys and frank are turned morose
 And harmful made, albeit more sweet by you
 Who spice each joy with savour of a sin !
 Yet tho' the vile impute his villainy
 To Beauty, still the marble Goddess stands
 A statue scribbled by the lounger's coal
 With trivial inscription, or unclean,
 Calm and impassive, heedless of the stain,
 Since one night's dew shall wash her white once
 more.

COLETTE.—(*To PEREGRINA*) :

Lady, fair stranger, like a soothsayer
 You prophesied for little Antony,
 I have a——friend, you mark him yonder, Gilles,
 Have you no cure for his moon-madness ?

PEREGRINA :

Aye !

He is of those who fear, too much, the sun,
 The gold great sun who all our lives should light,
 Too much you minister to the maddening moon,
 Mother of all Thessalian Sorcery,
 Strange spells and enigmatic oracles,
 Come forth into the sunlight from the dusk,
 And find how fair are flowers of the earth ! . . .

(PEREGRINA, *smiling, joins hands of GILLES and COLLETE.*)

OMBRAJE.—(*To PEREGRINA*) :

Lady, or Goddess, for you seem to me
 Fairer than mortal, come from very far,
 Those glens and glades where Mænads dance
 and dwell
 You told us lately of. Are those your home ?
 'Ere you shall pass as strangely as you came,

Leave us some message for our comfort. Tell
 Us Beauty-seekers how we may attain,
 How we may hope to hale our Goddess down
 From coursing on the high star-haunted hills,
 She only breathes that thin transcendent air,
 Drinking the clear spring at its icy source,
 And we who fain would climb, grow faint and fall,
 Since Very Beauty, true Philosophy
 Dwell far, so far !

PEREGRINA :

O single-hearted, seek !
 What though the quest should seem as vain as his,
 Who strives to trace the sources of the Nile,
 Yet sometime it has chanc'd clear vision'd men
 Have almost found the very Beauty's fount,
 As Spring-diviners with their speaking staves,
 Threading the forest light on hidden wells.
 Sculptor, musician, painter, poet, aye—
 The poet chiefly maybe, as he leans

To catch the echo of Her flying feet,
 To mark the flutter of Her waving veil,
 Still seeking Beauty as a blind man light,
 A babe the breast, seaman the pilot star.
 If but Her shadow fall across his book
 His verse is ageless attar, in a vase
 Close-seal'd against the tyranny of Time.
 You take it from it's shelf, and lift the lid,
 Scent of a long dead Summer breathes again
 Subtle and sweet as this last June's, that pass'd
 With all her thronging roses !

HERMES :

Carve or sing,
 Model or paint, but ever in your work
 Set what is best in Beauty's honour, grave
 Your golden sentence with a golden pen,
 For Style is the expression fair andfeat
 Of exquisite impression. So the die
 The minter presses on the molten gold

Gives out the perfect medal to the world.
 Each face of guardian God or hero-head,
 Their clear-cut brows bound with the victor's
 palm,
 With towers crown'd or bays, or ears of corn,
 As power or plenty, wealth or glory will,
 And Genius that God-engraven die
 We call.

SYLVIE :

Must Beauty ever be richly hous'd
 In splendid palace roof'd of fretted gold
 With pretious marble colonnades arow ?

PEREGRINA :

Nay, often with the simplest, Beauty dwells
 If flaw'd your agate, your cornelian,
 Your oriental alabaster be,
 Still may a fragment fashion'd to a cup
 Sweeten the homely draught of every day.

Even a beechen bowl is beautiful,
 A cedar, fallen, makes a fragrant press,
 Or breathes it's sweetness out in glowing fire.
 Nothing so grand that it awake not joy,
 Nothing so slight but you may joy in it,
 Fragrance of flowers, cool of water-spring,
 A Gothic Fane's capricious fantasy
 As in an Attic Temple's line and law,
 Savour of fruit as warmth of winter fire
 The silver stars, the splendour of the sun,
 The placid and the vex'd complaining sea !

OMBRAJE :

Lady, have you no oracle for me,
 What of my future ?

PEREGRINA :

Like the wandering bird
 That builds no nest, that has no resting-place,
 That never furls a travel-weary wing,

But evermore, reposeless voyager
Drifting in tempest, floating in the calm,
Oars with untiring flight the deep of heav'n,
You'll wander the wide world thro', preferring
still

To calm of Summertide the Winter's storm,

Leaning to hear, in Autumn, by the sea

The myriad voices of the deep's despair,

Lamenting some irreparable wrong,

Some incommunicable agony,

Or listen thro' the sunny Autumn noon

To sky and ocean's speechful silences.

Still leaving the order'd hearth, the guarded
flame,

To follow a glimmering lure of wandering lights,

The faltering fires of some failing star,

You'll know the insistent summons of the dusk,

The unquiet prompting of the wooing woods,

That stirs the ageless sylvan in his sleep,

That calls the slumb'ring woodman to wake.

The Faun, the Centaur harbours in you yet,
 Thrilling responsive to the night-fall's spell,
 As passing to the wizard woods you find
 A philtre in the drenching of the dew ;
 And ever waking or sleeping you shall hear
 A soft wind blowing from behind the moon,
 From past the sunset, from beyond the stars,
 Whispering you remembrance and regret,
 —A sweet regret, a poignant memory—
 That once you met with Beauty face to face,
 And that She pass'd from you upon Her way !
 But what blows hither as the night-wind wakes ?

OMBRAJE :

The first sun - wither'd leaves come rustling
 down,
 Approaching Autumn's avant-couriers
 Clad in the russet of his liveries,
 Heralding in tumultuous Equinox.

Soon shall the flail o' the wind, the threshing
rains

Winnow the wet woods with the vans of storm.

PEREGRINA :

Already Autumn, I must seek my ship
And steer a far course to my Island Home,
The lost Atlantis.

OMBRAGE :

Not Cythera, then ?

PEREGRINA :

Not to the old Cythera, ruin'd now
By generations of barbaric men,
An arid rock where all the groves are dead,
The Lover's roses as the Sybil's bay
And Poet's laurel, only now remain
For wine and honey spill'd and spoil'd and sped,
Cliffs amber yellow like dun honeycomb

Rising at evening from the wine-hued sea
Violet.

OMBRAGE :

Mourning, for a present past
That rose from those fair waters long ago.
Yet still that presence broods upon the sea,
And I shall go the gladder all my days
Nursing the memory, the sweet regret
For that I once have seen the living light,
A flame late litten at that sacred fire
An emanation of the Essential Beauty,
Which burns for ever in the Absolute
Immutable, immortal, immanent,
Many and diverse be the lamps that hold
From age to age the ever-burning flame,
But one the light that shines within them still !

PEREGRINA :

Impending Autumn threatens, I must pass
Before the swallow, soon to greet again

The denizens of the dear elder world,
 Oread, Centaur, Nereid, and Faun,
 Who wait for me in my far island home.

HERMES :

Yet even here they are not wholly dead,
 In gallant horseman and a perfect horse
 The once-dissever'd Centaur lives again,
 For heart-whole heady rapture of the chase,
 The forest-haunting lad is half a Faun,
 Spoiling the vineyard, harrying the hive,
 The wine-warm'd peasant a Silenus seems.
 The girl who meets her lover in the woods,
 Who bathes at noontide in the forest pool
 Is almost Nymph.

PEREGRINA :

Aye, still Eternal Youth
 As Dionysos cries upon the hills
 Holloaing up the hunt, each April-tide

As young Adonis wakes again from sleep,
 With the divine renascence of the year.
 So long as the native gladness of the world,
 The pure primæval passion of the Spring
 Breathe in the soft wind, pulse in the sea wave,
 Stir in the blood and beacon from the eye,
 Reigns, and shall reign the Universal Pan,
 Who is not dead, who never died at all,
 Nor ever can die whilst the world endure !

PEREGRINA :

(To the group in foreground.)

Farewell good people, dwell you here secure,
 And lead you still your comfortable lives
 Thrill'd by no passion, stung by no despair,
 Your dense peace vex'd by no fraternal strife,
 Of mind and soul and body's enmity,
 Of earthly influence warring with the sky's.

OMBRAGE :

Yet who shall say they are not happiest, these,
 Whose dull soul never quickens with a pang,
 Who never know the dear divine unrest,
 The stirring of a worthy discontent,
 Fretted by no such fever as attends
 The sprouting of the vans celestial
 Which wither'd from us when to earth we fell !
 The clods' indifference to a wooing star,
 Is theirs, and crass contentment of the clod.

(To the By-standers.)

But shun you Beauty as a very bane
 Which like the sea in equinoctial might
 May break the dyke that guards your sluggish
 lives,
 Sweeping unwonted currents on your calm,
 Ruinous, overwhelming——

PEREGRINA :

So farewell,
For I withdraw me to my island home.

OMBRAGE :

You pass, you leave us?

PEREGRINA :

Yonder lies my barque,
Twinning herself upon the crystal tide,
So clear so sharp her mere reflection.
You wonder which is shadow, and which is ship,
If both be real or both a fantasy
Moulded of magic this mid-August eve,
And I must pass upon that galley of dream
To my fair island of unfading May
Set in a sea of sempiternal Spring.
Follow me, find me, thro' the ivory gate
Lies the way thither, to the happy land,
The fortunate isle where the dearest dream comes
true !

GILLES :

The Moon is far, here's for the moon-flower !

*(As PEREGRINA and HERMES retire up the stage
a song is heard from the ship.)*

ISLAND FORTUNATE.

Fare fortunately mariners ! who steer neath Summer
skys

To nearer ports, for surer gain, full freighted
argosies.

Your trafficking unhinder'd be by harms the Fates
inflict

The blind oncoming of the berg, or galley derelict.

Better ye deem to tempt the deep than moulder at
the quay,

Sure, what the heedful merchant dare, we—how
much rather—may.

All ocean patent to our quest, who seek with hearts
elate

The shining happy palaces of Island Fortunate.

We pass'd a convoy guarded fleet in sunset waters
rock'd

The careful coasters cried to us, the men of battle
mock'd

As half regretfully we gazed where floating fair
and free

The pennons of the fighting ships dipp'd silken to
the sea.

We know not how their traffic throve, nor how the
battle sped

But these we left to count their pelf, and these to
tell their dead.

As vain their dream of petty gain, as theirs of
martial state

To us who sought the wide world through for
Island Fortunate.

What waits us, once our goal attain'd? For each
one as I deem
The utter realising of his every dearest dream
I think that as our wave-worn ship drops anchor in
that bay
A honey-colour'd harvest-moon will mock the paler
day
Lighting the league-long gardens up, whose hidden
hollows hold
The ruddy glow of oranges, the citron's paler gold,
Whilst,—sunder'd half a life-time long by some
untoward fate
Lost lovers wait to welcome us to Island Fortunate.

Our company grows still the less, for certain of
our train
A seeming Eldorado once gleam'd golden from
the main,
I think that on that barren reef some specious
magic burn'd,

Never our comrades came again, never their boat
return'd.

And some one long long Winter slept and waked
no more in Spring,

And some were lost who rowed at night to hear
the mermaid sing.

More witching music they had heard had they but
heart to wait

Melody passing sirens' song, in Island Fortunate.

Young-hearted as at setting forth—grey-headed,
say the churls ?

'Tis that the sea-spray dusts with white our salt-
encumber'd curls.

Still in a wild and wintry waste we fare upon our
quest

Not elsewhere can we find a home, nor otherwhere
a rest.

To catch what wind of Heaven may blow, our sails
are still unfurl'd,

We sail the vast uncharted deep, the wondrous
water-world

Somewhere to find, somewhere to see, somehow to
win, though late

The fair far haven in the sea of Island Fortunate.

Cradled by some consoling dream he who should
vigil keep

An hour before a shameful death, sinks smiling
into sleep.

And Mirage-mock'd, the cast-away, scanning a
sail-less sea

Leaps headlong down the glassy deep in meadow
green to be ;

It turns the wasted wilderness to water'd paradise
Last vision, as the sandstorm blinds the dying
pilgrim's eyes.

Our life is ruled by Mirages, and just beyond the
gate

Whether of Horn or Ivory lies Island Fortunate.



4m

VERSES
AND
TRANSLATIONS.

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CONTENTS.

			PAGES
THE MASQUER'S SONG	-	-	1-2
AMOR MENDAX	-	-	3-4
THE DIAL	-	-	5-7
MIMOSA	-	-	8-10
HOPELESS DAWN	-	-	11-12
THE RUNAGATE	-	-	13-15
PARADIS PERDU	-	-	16-17
LOVE'S ETERNITY	-	-	18-19
ARBOR VITAE—ARBOR SCIENTIAE	-	-	20-21
THE TELESCOPE	-	-	22
COL TEMPO	-	-	23
A LEAVE-TAKING	-	-	24-27
ICARIAN	-	-	28
A GHOST'S SONG	-	-	29-30
HOME-COMING	-	-	31-33
PREDESTINATE	-	-	34-37
A FALLEN STAR	-	-	38
DEFUNCTUS	-	-	39-40
WILLY THE DANCER	-	-	41-44
THE CHANGELING	-	-	45-46
THRALL TO FAERY	-	-	47-52
GRAVE-DIGGER'S SONG	-	-	53
THE TRYST	-	-	54-58
A REQUITAL	-	-	59-61
THE CASTLE BUILDERS	-	-	62-64
THE VOICES	-	-	65-67

JARDIN BLEU	-	-	-	-	68-71
FINIS	-	-	-	-	72-75
THE PHILTRE	-	-	-	-	76-79
VANITAS VANITATUM	-	-	-	-	80
HESTERNAE ROSAE	-	-	-	-	81-82
PEREGRINA'S SONG	-	-	-	-	83-85
MARIUS TO FLAVIAN	-	-	-	-	86-88
THRENODY	-	-	-	-	89-90
SHEEP OF HIS PASTURE	-	-	-	-	91-92
STAR-GAZER'S SONG	-	-	-	-	93
S'IL L'AVAIT SU	-	-	-	-	97-98
"EN CHEMIN"	-	-	-	-	99-100
LOVE O'ERTHROWN	-	-	-	-	101-102
MANDOLINE	-	-	-	-	103-104
CLAIR DE LUNE	-	-	-	-	105
COLLOQUE SENTIMENTAL	-	-	-	-	106-107
MARJOLAIN	-	-	-	-	108-110
GOSSAMER	-	-	-	-	111-113
ODELETTE	-	-	-	-	114-115
CHRYSILLA	-	-	-	-	116
THE DANCE	-	-	-	-	117-118
SONNET FOR BILITIS	-	-	-	-	119
FUNERAL MARCH FOR THE DEATH OF THE					
EARTH	-	-	-	-	120-125
THE PILGRIM OF FATE	-	-	-	-	126-127
ISLAND FORTUNATE	-	-	-	-	128-133
THE FRIEND FORGETFUL	-	-	-	-	134
A DEDICATION	-	-	-	-	135
FOR A TOMB	-	-	-	-	136

*THE LAMP.**(*Salve Amica Lux.*)*

*A lamp one household lit and warm'd
With pale gold fire, for two or three
Winds of the world all vainly storm'd
Whilst thro' the lamp's transparency
Shone forth the steadfast-burning light,
A Pharos for the seas of Night.*

*To bread and flowers, fruit and wine
This lamp, with gentle flame serene
Would lend a beauty strange and fine,
The broider'd linen fair and clean
The whiter shone, Her steady ray
Transfigured things of every day.*

But screen'd in vain the cherished light !

Our golden flame her radiance lost,

Now low, now burning overbright,

Till the poor lamp—so tempest toss'd

In winds of adverse destiny—

Breath'd out her still life, silently.

Whither, when lamps of Earth expire

May pass the flame whose hour is done ?

To that essential fount of fire

Which lights the stars, which feeds the sun ?

Too high the sun ! The glimmering star

Gleams frostily so far, so far !

And then, they tell us, suns must die,

The legions of the starry camp,

The Planet Captains of the sky

Waning and paling like a lamp,

One day breathe out their life of flame,

Whelm'd in the dark without a name !

*O God, O Pan, O flame-bestower,
Somewhere, somehow, the lamp, anew
With its essential flame endower,
So the same steadfast fire shine through
For us, who lost a well-lov'd light,
And lampless, linger in the night.*



THE MASQUER'S SONG.

WE'LL to the woods no more, lopp'd is the laurel
now,

The glory green despoil'd, and leafless every
bough,

The fair crowns cut away that grew so green
before ;

Passionate Pilgrims, peace ! we'll to the woods no
more.

We'll to the woods no more, the wild wood nymph
bewept,

In order'd columns fell, like swathes the scythe
has swept,

The woodland shrine is down, we loved so well of
yore,

Poor Pilgrims dispossess'd, we'll to the woods no
more.

O, Lovers, fall'n, laps'd our pilgrimage's fane—
The low-laid sylvan shrine will spring no more
again
From high-pil'd roof of cloud, from shadow-dappl'd
floor,
Passionate Pilgrims, pass, we'll to the woods no
more.

AMOR MENDAX.

LOVE is . . . what? a mirage-lake, where there
is no thirst slaking,

Or a dream, — November - dream'd — of lilac-
scented May ;

A vision fair as faithless that but leaves you find
on waking,

The wailing wind more pitiful, the winter world
more gray.

Love's a sleek and supple slave, Love's a tyrant
master,

Love's a star, the homeward-faring sailor's way
to light,

That in the seaman's hour supreme of dire and
deep disaster

Falls from out its custom'd sphere, to leave him
blind in night.

Love's a hawk that swoops unbid, but scorns a
lure that's proffer'd,

Love's a summer sunshine friend, that will not
face the rain,

Love's that fleeting fairy gold which, gathered up
and coffer'd,

Changes into wither'd leaves, nor turns to gold
again.

OMNIA VULNERANT ULTIMA NECAT.

ME LUMEN, VOS UMBRA REGIT.

‘LIFE flies, as flies the shadow,’ upon the dial we
read—

We passed from the hay-sweet meadow to the cool
shade cedar-spread—

Not gold, but counters staking, we trifled, you
and I,

At the pleasant game love-making that makes the
time go by.

My forehead in the fountain cooled I laid upon the
stone—

‘Be my life, like the dial’s, ruled by sunny hours
alone !

‘Till dusk drop down the valley and the bees
shall leave the lime

‘I’ll dream in my garden alley, for dreaming kills
the time.’

Ah, golden days to grayness turned, and gray hairs
for the head !

The fire within my heart that burned has fallen
gray and dead

As the iron sky of frost above and the dead leaves
in the grass—

’Twas a pleasant pastime making love, till Time
made love to pass.

To the garden cedar-alleyed I bid my last good-bye,

To the snow-crowned statues pallid, and the frost-bound fountain dry.

Ah, Dial, Dial, white with rime, but the good days fled too fast—

When I dreamed a dream of killing time, to find Time slays at last.

MIMOSA.

MIMOSA blossomed ; through the palm
My idle glances wandered to
The turquoise Southern sea, all balm
Of scent, and sight, and heat, and hue
Was there ; and meeting, I and you,
—Scent of Mimosa in the sun—
There was our dream of love begun !

Mimosa makes oasis here ;
This banal little London room
Is lent some Southern scent and cheer
By feathery leaf, and dusty bloom,
As your love lights December's gloom
For me. Talk not of shame. I know
What to be loved, and love is now.

I loved you, opened wide the shrine
Wherein mine inmost thoughts were pent ;
Heart beat to heart—too anxious mine ?
Ah ! yours was too indifferent !
A pity with your love was blent,
And pity quickly grows to hate
When soul and soul are separate.

Mimosa, flower of memories,
Best loved of all those Southern flowers,
Your pollened gold bids re-arise—
Dashed even then with April showers—
Those by-gone days of sunny hours.
So quickly fled that now they seem
A short Mimosa-scented dream.

Ah, dear, but just once more to hold
Your crisp curled head upon my breast !
Once more your kisses as of old
To feel, possessing, and possessed !
Ah ! old sins' rapture and unrest—
I had forgotten half my pain,
These flowers have brought it back again.

HOPELESS DAWN.

REST you, poor soul of mine, cares of the day
resigning,

Watchers but wake to weep, choose you the
wiser way;

Wreathe you a poppied wreath, your tired temples
twining,

Wander the fields of dream, my soul, forget the
paths of day !

What of the night, my soul ? The stars are paler
burning,

Flaming no word to us who watch till Hope's
last star be set.

Illomen'd yesterdays, to tragic morrows turning,
Dark as the past has been, my soul, the future
darker yet.

Here is the dawn again, after the dream the
waking ;

Slumber no more, my soul, the day comes chill
and gray,

Yet one more bubble blown, still, as we grasp it,
breaking.

Ah ! saddest, weariest, worst of all the days—
To-day !

THE RUNAGATE.

Ah, no, this swifter, more silent river
Is not so fair as our English brooks.
These birds are dumb, though they gem-like quiver;
And, ah, the music of homing rooks !
Sure, I was a fool when I left my village
A-field to wander—a-far to roam,
In an alien glebe and a foreign tillage,
A world away from the friends at home.

Audrey and Avis, Piers and Stephen,
Your fresh young voices are calling me !
At home on some scented springtime even
Or hay-sweet mid-summer noon to be—
Or on lands low-lying when weeds are burning,
Or when hares limp home on the field path's frore,
All time of year for my home returning
Were good, so I came to my home once more !

What now of my childish days would meet me
Of by-gone boyhood memorial?

My ten years' inches would surely greet me—
Wainscote scratched in the panelled hall.

The well-thumbed volume of *Æsop's fables*,
- My sole school prize in the book-shelf still,
And yet, in the hay-loft above the stables,
My name rough-carved on the window sill.

The great sea's voice in the upper chamber,
With its Eastward lattice the dawn to watch—
The porch whose roses and woodbine clamber
To twine the chimney and top the thatch ;
The vagrant vine with its verdant clusters,
That would not ripen, yet always might,
On the garden steps with the stone balusters—
Are mine for ever by memory's right.

Ah me, for an hour at home to find me
In the dim old country, on English land !
To see the dear ones I left behind me,
To pray their pardon, to grasp their hand.
Would welcome await the wide world's ranger ?
Ah ! worse than death if I were to come,
To find in my father's house the stranger,
And doubly desert what once was Home.

PARADIS PERDU.

I HAD a garden by the sea,
How well I loved its paths to range !
Within were flowers of sweetness strange,
A temple and a Deity.
I thought them mine, through time and change,
Mine only, mine eternally
But I have lost that garden's key.

Sea-thistles and their weedy kin
Seed in my temple's ruined dome,
For flowers that were is floating foam,
Or drifted sand. The sea-birds' din
Is heard in what was Music's home,
And I no more the key may win,
Or walk my ruined garden in.

The empty, languid years go by,
Yet still as winds autumnal wake,
Old sorrow stirs with the old heart's ache,
Regret that sleeps but will not die—
The stony seaward path I take,
And steal at starset, silently,
The locked, unyielding gate to try.

LOVE'S ETERNITY.

HARK ! through the moonless night of May,
 Murmurs the sea-wind from the bay ;
 See in the sky crepuscular
 Glimmer and throb the lovers' star.
 Feigning forgotten, prudence past,
 Doubt not that life-long love shall last !
 Light us, O star, chant us, O sea,
 Our epithalamy.

Were it the last of nights to-night ?
 Should we not smile in Doom's despite,
 Watching the stricken stars flash by,
 Shaken like fruit from out the sky,
 Time unregarding. Fate above,
 Death were defied by deathless love !
 Since worse than Death if heart from heart
 Beat but one hour apart.

Dim is the sea, grey is the dawn,
Dew-drenched and dun the cob-webb'd lawn ;
Shrill call the birds from mist-clad trees,
Cold as our last kiss, morning's breeze ;
Clouded your eyes, and pale your brow,
Tarnished your gold hair's glory now.
Mutely at parting hearts confess
Love was a weariness !

ARBOR VITAE — ARBOR SCIENTIAE.

“ LEST he put forth his hand and take also
Of the Tree of Life and eat, and live for ever ” —
God did His Adam from His Eden sever,
Nay, then, how came it that He did not know ?

After their fall with such misfortune rife,
The snake, the subtle snake that was the Devil,
As well as of the Tree of Good and Evil,
Gave Eve and Adam of the Tree of Life.

When they went forth from Paradise out-driven,
Seed of that stolen fruit within their bosom
They bore away, in hope that it might blos-
som . . .
Where that seed flowers, man can make his own
heaven.

What though a thorny waste the outcasts trod—
If but that fruit should come to consummation,
Man knows the joy triumphant of creation—
Art makes a mortal equal to his God.

We plant, we dig, we water ; to fruition
Does the seed come, there's yet some taint goes
through it,
Never the sating sweetness of that fruit,
Which cures for ever thirst and inanition.

One bitter which should canker all the sweetness
He sought and found ; that thirst is quenchless,
burning,
They feel who, after true perfection yearning,
Find mirrored in their work their incompleteness.

THE TELESCOPE.

THE moon, that great white vampire of the skies,
Has sucked the breath of night, and all the Earth,
From the sleeping hills to the silver gleaming Firth,
Utterly still, this autumn midnight lies.

May we not hope for some amazing birth
Of wizardry star-gazing to arise?
And make apparent to our ears, and eyes,
More wonders yet, that lie in the great sky's girth.
May we not ruddy Mars for a neighbour claim,
And spy the life of far Aldebaran,
And hear the ringing sphere's tremendous tune,
And count the pulses of the solar flame?
Who through this magic tube so clearly scan
Sunrise upon the mountains of the Moon.

COL TEMPO.

I FOLDED me in silken gear,
I said, my youth-time shall not passe—
How young I lived from year to year !
To mirrour smiles and never a tear,
I made my countenance a glasse.
Surely, surely, this is not I—
This shrouded masqued anatomy ?

I thought the flight of Time to stay,
So heaped with flowers all the dyall,
But never a whit did the knave delay—
How fled the sunny hours away—
And now is come my time of tryall,
To find, as heavy at heart I stand,
Withered the flowers and night at hand.

A LEAVE-TAKING.

FAREWELL, farewell, Aurelian,
I loved you well, and I loved you long ;
But a woman is sooner old than a man,
And “parting” is truly a hackneyed song,
So I fare forth to take my chance
—Not yet too old for the journeying—
To sing and dance for the Queen of France,
And dance and sing for the Spanish King.

Nay, but I once had choice of all,
Guion, and Mare, and Olivier,
Amys, and Yves, and Percival,
Sought me all in my youth’s hey day.
I was a fool in my early spring,
Who, now that the autumn days advance,
Must dance and sing for the Spanish King,
And sing and dance for the Queen of France.

What do you say of Aurelian ?
 Killed ! my God, and in what way ?
 Killed ? dear heart, such a goodly man,
 In the jousting lists, the mimic fray.
 Struck, you say, by Amiles lance,
 Slain by chance in the tourneying !
 —I must sing and dance for the Queen of France,
 And dance and sing for the Spanish King !

His wife ? What is it I hear you say ?
 The wife he wedded for her dower.
 His wife has sent to the King to pray
 That I may be gone within the hour.
 She would drive me out on my wayfaring—
 Aye, ever she looked at me askance—
 To dance and sing for the Spanish King,
 And sing and dance for the Queen of France.

His wife ! nay, nay, Aurelian,
I had your love for so many a day,
That when your wedded life began,
You had no heart to give away.
With me you had played your life's romance ;
Your heart was mine, though I wore no ring
—Who sing and dance for the Queen of France,
And dance and sing for the Spanish King.—

I might have sent her the gifts you gave,
The letters you wrote, for her to see,
That would have been a vengeance brave ;
Second still in your heart to me—
Loving words of his whispering
To me, who now, through his mischance,
Must dance and sing for the Spanish King,
And sing and dance for the Queen of France.

Farewell, good-bye, Aurelian,
I must fare forth, though you lie still,
Without one kiss on your forehead wan,
Resting at last from Good and Ill
From Life and Time and Circumstance,
Whilst I, in the wide world wandering,
Must sing and dance for the Queen of France,
And dance and sing for the Spanish King.

ICARIAN.

I WAS a Walker of the plain ;
 One laid upon my shrinking lips
 Her cool immortal finger tips.
 I followed her for bliss or bane
 How far below the old earth dips.

We mounted through the blue inane,
 My flight's ascension nothing bars ;
 I commerce with my sister stars—
 Who walked so lately in the plain
 Is neighbour now to Moon and Mars.

Ah me, I sink to Earth again,
 Mere pigmy Alp and Appenine
 Me in their loathed vale confine ;
 I am a walker in the plain—
 How far aloof those cold stars shine.

A GHOST'S SONG.

WHENEVER the west wind whispers,
It stirs my lethargy ;
And earthward drawn, 'twixt dusk and dawn,
I cross the spirit sea ;
I reach the gulf dividing us
The living never know ;
And, fate unblest ! I cannot rest,
Because I loved you so.

Here we have torments manifold—
Some I have yet to learn—
But chiefly this : for vanished bliss
And bygone joys to yearn.
I dream I hold your dear gold head—
Your slender hands again ;
And the vision flies my longing eyes,
And leaves me doubled pain.

West of the sun and east of the moon,

Here for a while I dwell ;

But cease to pray for me, that day

I must go down to Hell.

And I think that hour will soon be here,

For the reek of the pit grows dense,

And the wails more loud of the lost, lost crowd,

That are passing thither, hence.

When you win up to Heaven above,

A blessed saint you'll be,

At Mary's feet, still quiring sweet,

To harp and psaltery.

And since I loved you than my soul

More dearly, I must lie

In a fastness fell of the nether Hell

To all Eternity.

HOME-COMING.

WHAT, Home returned god-daughter, Jehane,
Jehane ?

And, though so fair apparelled, come first to us
again ?

In the lane, though no lamplight fall,
And the sleet beat in a white fall !

. . . . I am one that walks at nightfall,
Marryne, Marryne.

Sure, Piers will joy to see you, Jehane, Jehane.

He is working late this even, though the night is
blind with rain.

On the scaffold hammer plying
. . . . 'Tis a work will leave him sighing,
Till *his* day come for dying,
Marryne, Marryne.

Come you to wed a noble, Jehane, Jehane?
Then Jacklin, Joan, and Janet shall carry up your
train,
With the little children spreading
Myrtle, and rose leaves shedding—
. . . Nay, I come not to a wedding,
Marryne, Marryne.

But I see a rout of linkmen, Jehane, Jehane,
For all the night has grown so dark, they light
our little lane.
How they scan the cottage porches,
. . . 'Tis a flame that brands and scorches,
But they are not wedding torches,
Marryne, Marryne.

Are these your grooms, your men-at-arms, Jehane,
Jehane?

Is it the torch flare lights your robe to such a
sanguine stain?

. . . I have nor page nor varlet,

And I am clad in scarlet
As sorceress and harlot,

Marrayne, Marrayne.

Who wronged you—yet may wed you—Jehane,
Jehane?

. . . An ardent groom is waiting me and of
my body fain,

Yon pile of logs for bower,
With a faggot for my dower,
They burn me in an hour,
Marrayne, Marrayne.

PREDESTINATE.

‘ You have woven a fair and shining web
From the fantasies of hope,
But I know his life till his last breath ebb,
So hark to his horoscope’—
The glad God-parents gazed in fear,
And the Chrisom-child they blessed,
As they waited all amazed to hear
His life predicted year by year,
By the uninvited guest.

‘As a child gropes straight to its mother’s breast,
And drinks without fear or doubt,

To the bosom of ill your lips are pressed,
And you suck strange sins thereout.

As one returned from a journey far,
To his own familiar home,

Goes straight to the place where his treasures are,
Unshoots the bolt, and lets down the bar,
So you to this world have come.

‘Every look of your beauty’s pride,
Every glance of your eye,

Be that of a sinner who lived and died,
In years that are long gone by,

And, like a garment, clothe you round
The trick of the speech and lips,

Of those who have long been underground,
And, for this world’s companions, found

Hell’s fearfuller fellowships.

' Women shall love you, and though they rue
 The day when you they met,
 In after years they shall think of you
 With passionate deep regret,
 Braving the world and scouting shame,
 And willing to pay the price,
 The wildest quarry you take and tame,
 Ah ! love to you is an easy game,
 And you play with loaded dice.

' For a Spirit sits your glance within,
 And looks from out your eyes,
 Sin that calls to her sister sin,
 Vice that invokes a vice ;
 And the soul replying for its mischance,
 You shall goad with Dull Desire,
 Or spur with Passion's more piercing lance,
 In a rosy dream or a haggard trance,
 To the everlasting fire.

‘ If a man sow tares in his garden plot
Along with the flower seeds,
Shall the good grain flourish, the bad grain rot,
Live flowers, and die the weeds ?
Not so, not so, there shall come a day
When the garden’s overgrown
Only with tares, when the flowers gay,
Choked and smothered, have passed away,
While the ill weeds reign alone.

‘ You shall be the supreme blossom of ill,
In a garden devil-tilled—
Of all the poisons in Satan’s Still,
The essence thrice distilled.
Epitome of an evil race,
There heavy on you shall be—
(For you owe to your forbears more than grace
Of form, or mind, or figure, or face)—
The doom of Heredity.’

A FALLEN STAR.

It leapt from out its lucent sphere,
A fleck of starry foam ;
It swam the blue abysses sheer—
I wished my friend, my very dear,
Might love me, love me, far or near,
Through all the years to come.

It must have been a false, false star,
Cast out from Heaven above,
That spread a baleful light afar,
Presaging Pestilence or War,
Else why did falsehood friendship mar ?
Why did I lose my love ?

DEFUNCTUS.

STRONG with its stunted tower, under the driving
shower,

Stands the gray Church, with the moors for a
setting ;

Under this turf^y heap my old friend sleeps his sleep,
Lichen and sea wind the headstone are fretting.

What did he with his life ? Cared for an ailing
wife,

Buttressed the bridge and rebuilt the byre ;
Drained the five-acre field, doubled the Farmstead
yield,

Tiled the west gable end after the fire.

Drought in the early Spring, rain at the harvesting,
Even a good season's niggardly bounty,
All his life-long he knew ; yet oats like his were few,
And his swedes famous on this side the county.

Now his day's work is done, night begun, resting
won,
He lies so quietly under the clover ;
Heeds not the rain and wind, this world well left
behind,
' Good times and bad times and all time got
over.'

WILLY THE DANCER.

THE wind is abroad to-night,
He pipes for the world to wake,
The waves toss light their crests of white,
The slim reeds sway in the brake,
The clouds sweep high in the windy sky,
And whenever the moon peers through,
She seems storm-driven to dance through Heaven,
So Will must be dancing too.

Never a one like him—
Never a one was found
So straight and slim and light of limb,
From Hythe to Devizes round.
Con the crowder would fiddle the louder,
And faster he still would play,
When—buckles glancing—Willy was dancing—
Dancing my heart away.

Our banns were called in the Church—

Willy a cargo ran ;

The 'ventive men went down to search,

A fight for the rum began.

Who fired the first in the mellay's worst—

None know . . . when the gauger dropped
Our lads, faint-hearted, broke and parted,

But Will for the finish stopped.

They laid him in Sandwich Jail,

And still in the wet I'd trudge ;

How could I fail ? Sir Edward Bale

Was known for a hanging Judge.

Oh, that windy day, in the court-house gray—

Guilty ! the Judge took breath ;

He urged repentance, and then the sentence

I knew, as I swooned, was *death*.

The day that he was to die,
Did he falter, my own brave heart ?
Nay—he bade good-bye, with his head held high,
And danced a spring in the cart.
As he waved adieu with the breast-knot blue
Of his ruffled Holland smock,
With Church bells tolling, the cart was rolling
To Execution Dock.

The dead leaves shrivel and curl
That the winds Autumnal reap ;
They dance and whirl to the wild wind's skirl,
Then sink to their last long sleep.
I comfort find in the wailing wind,
My heart, as a leaf, is stirred—
My limbs are quaking, my grey head shaking,
In time to a tune half heard.

The shutters shake in the street,
In a wind blown fair from France ;
And my thoughts, more fleet than my palsied feet,
Which never again shall dance,
Pass out where harsh the wind on the marsh
Pipes high to a jigging set,
As it flaws the shallows and shakes the gallows,
Where Willy is dancing yet.

THE CHANGELING.

Give back the child again
To his mortal mother mild ;
I am fain, I am fain, of the wind and the rain,
The night, and the moorland wild—
For I am a fairy child !

Give back her child, I tire
Of this warm, sequestered place ;
Of her tears I tire, that burn like fire,
Dropping upon my face ;
I pine for the open space.

And cold is the marsh fire's blaze
For him, and the glow-worm's light,
Whose mother prays thro' the dreary days,
And watches the live-long night—
Where the hearth is swept and bright.

O that I now were straying
Abroad on an elfin quest,
To watch the swaying of tides obeying
The Magian moon's behest—
The wind and the waves unrest !

Or spending a noon of leisure
By the gray stone rune-enscored,
Which guards a treasure beyond men's measure,
Deep in the grave-hill stored—
The Viking's buried hoard.

You couch in the heather and ling,
On the shore of the wind-vex'd main ;
Your shrill songs ring to the surges swing ;
I cannot forget that strain—
I long for my own again.

THRALL TO FAERY.

THE peasants flocked the township in, secure from
week of labour,

And here was flute and violin, and here was pipe
and tabor,

And town-folk hailed their country kin, and neighbour greeted neighbour.

Through all the crowd a rumour ran, from one to
other sweeping,

‘ Beside the fountain stands the man who caught
the Fairies sleeping.’

I marked a swart Egyptian a grated coffer keeping.

‘ Ah, dreamy face and dusky eyes, yourself of
Elfish seeming,

‘ Child, I can read your reveries ; the playmates
of your dreaming

‘ Are here : each captive creature lies and waits
but your redeeming.

‘ They only dwell, in the great world’s girth,
outside of good and evil,

‘ Subject alone, of all on earth, neither of God nor
Devil,

‘ In green, still places of their mirth holding their
ancient revel.

‘ Old Time to them is but a myth, they flout his
sable pinions,

‘ Weave, weave the dance each other with, my
moppets and my minions,

‘ Far, far away, your careless kith—your death-
debarr’d dominions.’

For gold my temple's golden band was all I had to
proffer,

But hound from heel and hawk from hand made
better worth my offer,

· · · And far, in search of Fairyland, I bore
the grated coffer.

Each morn I started earlier forth, for ill they
brook'd delaying,

And weariness was nothing worth, since time
would come for playing,

And still they pointed to the North, and still I
fared obeying.

I said, 'When gleams the first faint star, their
vagrant fancy homing

'Will lead them thro' crepuscular bye-ways of
dreamland roaming.'

· · · They sate, their green eyes gazed afar,
and glittered in the gloaming.

Perchance they whispered whilst I slept, I rose,
and stepping lightly
To listen at their prison crept, but watching,
watching nightly,
Their eyes wide opened still they kept, but little
lips closed tightly.

At home, I thought, in kindlier mood, secure from
mortal seizure,
They'll share my play in the dim wood, partakers
of my pleasure,
And I shall feast on Fairy food, and foot a Fairy
measure.

We passed a mighty Minster grey, high-perch'd
as Eagles' eyrie,
Where pious Pilgrims press'd to pray St. Cuthbert
and St. Marie ;
I only had no prayer to say, for I was thrall to
Faëry.

We passed a giant-tumbled wall, some age-old
empire bounding,
Ruin'd, yet still imperial, of what great builder's
founding ?

The Autumn wind blew over all, the sullen sea
was sounding.

Now all the world was Autumn-dyed and Winter
was advancing,

When, in a heathery country side, by hazard on
it chancing,

The emerald Elfin-rings I spy'd and place of
Fairies' dancing.

My captives cry'd as nestlings cheep to greet the
day new risen ;

Their bright eyes seemed no more asleep—no
more their cheek was wizen ;

I laid the cage on the brae-side steep and opened
wide their prison.

One long, unearthly, shrilling cry, exulting and
resistless,

And they were fled, alone was I, and now I linger
listless,

Brooding upon a memory like grieving lover
trystless.

Far, far in Heaven's azure roof cold stars shine,
fix'd and fateful ;

From men I ever held aloof, and now my life is
hateful ;

I put the Fairies to the proof—to find them
. . . how ungrateful !

GRAVE-DIGGER'S SONG.

THE Earth buildeth on the earth
 Tall towers and fine,
 Filled with music and with mirth ;
 Yet Earth saith to Earth :
 All shall be mine !

The dust maketh for the dust
 Costly funeral—
 Gold and purple rot and rust,
 Lay the dust to the dust,
 'Neath a sable pall.

The clay warreth with the clay,
 Till Ice-cold Death
 Call friend as foe away—
 Clay turn again to clay—
 Clay covereth.

THE TRYST.

‘ CAME a messenger to meet you,
Catharine,
With some tiding of his riding
Hither soon, or place of biding,
Where your lover waits to greet you,
Catharine ? ’

—Aye, his messenger hath sought me
Here, and tidings of him brought me,
Sister mine.

‘ Came a carrier-bird a-winging,
 Catharine,
 Gold ring broken, riband, token,
 Written word more sweet than spoken,
 From your laggard lover bringing,

Sister mine ? ’

—Nay, my messenger far travelled,
 Bore a strand of hemp unravelled,
 For a sign.

‘ Winged a Dove, your casement seeking,
 Catharine ?

Snowy painted, legend sainted— ’
 —Nay, a raven, carrion tainted,
 In the windy sunset shrieking

‘ Catharine,’

Flying hills and valleys over,
 Bore a message from my lover,
 Sister mine.

‘ Is he noble, as he hinted,

Catharine ? ’

—Each beholder, on his shoulder
Sees the Royal Lily smoulder,
By the King’s command imprinted,

Sister mine ;

Every Countess of the bye-way
Hails him Prince of Paris Highway,
Fair and fine.

‘ Has he mansion for you builded,

Catharine ? ’

—Square to Heaven, said the raven,
Starry-vaulted, grassy-paven,
Moonlight silvered, sunset gilded—

‘ Catharine ! ’

With the rack above it flying,
And the birds about it crying,

Sister mine.

‘ What so great a Lord’s employment,
 Catharine ? ’

—Plays or dances, as it chances,
 With his lemans and free lances
 Night-long, so he finds enjoyment,
 Sister mine.

All, disdaining floor of timber
 Wondrous light and lithe and limber,
 Dance in line.

‘ What attendants grace his Palace,
 Catharine ? ’

—Count Snatchfogle, Madam Ogle,
 And the Gräfin Galgenvögel.
 Some are rowing in the galleys—
 ‘ Catharine ! ’

—Söoner, later, all the bevy
 Meet, unwilling, at his levee,
 Sister mine.

‘ You are young and you can tarry,
Catharine.

It is fated, though I waited
Life-long here, I’d not be mated ;
Let *me* keep this tryst to marry,

Sister mine ! ’

—I will not the match prohibit ;
Seek him—on Montfauçon Gibbet.

He is thine.

A REQUITAL.

How peaceful were the Convent ways—
With Nun-like service cumbered ;
Prayer and penitence and praise,
My Cloistral seasons numbered ;
You breathed upon my ashen days,
And woke a fire that slumbered.

Only to know you, feel you nigh,
Worked in me like a leaven,
You made me that was lowly, high,
And fearless that was craven ;
Fearless, and glad for you to die,
—But sad to wake in Heaven.

An Alien Heaven not for me,
Was this my gain for dying ?
I sorrowed for you ceaselessly,
And soon, to stay my crying,
They let me wander forth, and free,
To regions lower-lying.

Granted so much, that loved so much
This only comfort tasting,
Some day to meet you, greet you, touch
You whithersoever hastening—
Content against your knees to crouch,
Though Doom were everlasting.

Between the place of pain and this
Abode of reparation,
Here, where the final parting is,
I watched from out my station,
The thronging souls that soared to bliss,
Or sank to reprobation.

A solitary sentinel
This hope my darkness lighted,
That troth would hold in Heaven or Hell
We two on earth had plighted ;
And He who doeth all things well
Would see my love requited.

Ah, crueler than Hell allows,
The guerdon of my earning !
Indifferent, with level brows,
My utter service spurning,
You passed, alone, to your last house,
No look upon me turning.

THE CASTLE BUILDERS.

‘ WHY, oh father, why so sad,
Woeful sad and pale ?
Is it that the harvest’s bad ?
That my brothers ail ? ’
. . . . Hush, hush, little lad,
Lest my purpose fail.

‘ Sure ’tis for some frolic fine,
You would have me wake !
Is it draught of honey wine,
Or a saffron cake ? ’
. . . . Peace, peace, son of mine,
Or my heart will break.

' Now we take the Castle's way,
 Building on the height ;
 What the Masons build by day,
 Fiends destroy at night.'
 There's an offering to pay
 That shall curb their spite.

' Father, here be Masons twin,
 With a torch of pitch ;
 Must I climb the wall within,
 To yon little niche ?'
 Aye, your father wealth to win,
 And to keep us rich.

' Father, I am cold and sore,
 I begin to tire ;
 I can see your face no more,
 As the stones rise higher.'
 Hush, boy, 'twill soon be o'er,
 Then for food and fire.

‘ Now they lay the latest stone,
And the mortar heap
Must I, till the dawn, alone,
Watch in darkness deep ? ’
. . . . Nay, God grant you, youngest son
Soon to fall asleep.

See the Castle on the fell
Frown the crags among,
There to stand impregnable
All the years along,
For the base is builded well,
And the tower is strong.

THE VOICES.

O BREATH'D it from the sleeping sea,
Or from the starry sky,
The song that turn'd my tuneless life,
To matchless melody ?
For all the sea was full of fire,
And broke in starry spray,
When I heard to my undoing
The song, insidious, wooing,
Calling, calling, calling me away.

How can I hear a lover's voice,
 How heed a lover's sighs ?
 I move—a thing apart—and seal'd
 To stranger destinies.
 My love, like flame in sunlight,
 Has fallen thin and gray,
 Who listen in the distance,
 For that song's sweet insistence,
 Calling, calling, calling me away.

My mother nods to her last sleep,
 Beside her crazy wheel ;
 My brother from his fishing brings
 Torn net and empty creel ;
 But mother, brother, lover—
 Oh, what to me are they !
 The world's forgot, forsaken,
 When the thrilling voices waken,
 Calling, calling, calling me away.

How quiet, colourless, and clear,
 My listless life sped by ;
But now my day is dim with dream,
 And dense with extasy.

In the silence of the night, in
 The pauses of the day,
I listen, daz'd and stricken,
 Till the Fairy music quicken,
Calling, calling, calling me away.

And mystic music colours all
 My clear day crystalline,
As the meanest glass glows jewel-wise,
 Filled up with generous wine ;
When the dusk drops purple-pinion'd,
 I listen by the bay,
As the stars lean out to woo me,
 And the thrilling song goes through me,
Calling, calling, calling me away.

JARDIN BLEU.

THE Queen of France's daughter, in summer
woods astray

—Her life was at its spring-time, the year was at
the May—

Pacing the forest footpath, happed on enchanted
ground,

Whose Fairy bade her welcome to a magic
garden's bound.

‘ Welcome, I bid you welcome, O ! King's
daughter of France !

O lips so ripe for laughter, and fleet feet for the
dance,

I bid you to my garden, where drowsy breezes stir
From fragrant hills of Frankincense, and mountains
all of myrrh.

‘Once past the gate cerulean, your measured way
you’ll take,
Down steps of lapis lazuli, beside the sapphire lake.
The while above you, you will hear, the summer
morning long,
The blue bird sing, untiringly, his sweetest,
strangest song.’

Almost the Princess entered in, but, halting to
and fro
She heard, far down the valley glen, the morning
bugle blow ;
She thought her of her princely state, she feared
her courtly kin,
She turned her from the garden blue and would
not enter in.

Long, long years afterwards, one May, she mused
with bitter tears

Upon the promise unfulfilled of all the empty years.
She sought the wood, she found the fay : ' I know
the world is vain,

So open me the portals of the garden blue again ! '

' Begone, Princess Presumptuous,' the Fairy
cried, with scorn,

' Small pleasure when a rose is dead in scentless
stalk and thorn ;

Your life is at the autumn, you should have sued
in spring,

Nor come gray-headed to my gate, so fain of
entering.'

‘No praying priest can aid you now, no sooth-sayer with spell ;
My garden’s gate is fantasy—a dream its sentinel ;
For all it opens once in life, it opened once for you,
You would not pass the portal of the Fairy garden blue !’

FINIS.

As you loitered where the shade is, a dainty web
you spun.

A masquer black arrayed is who walks behind
you—slow.

Ah ! no more you'll walk the Mall,
In your muff and cardinal,

Gay Ladies.

Your lodging score unpaid is ? They'll sell to pay
your pall,

With each small high-heeled shoe,
That such stony footpaths knew . . .
Did your heart ache sometimes, too ?

Gay Ladies.

Nor the puppet show, nor play,
May tempt you forth to-day,

Gay Ladies,

For the latest play outplayed is, the puppets laid
away ;

Watched by a withered crone,
Cold as marble, still as stone,
At length you sleep alone,

Gay Ladies.

So farewell your Mechlin tête,

Your hoop, and panier's state,

Gay Ladies,

A hireling hag your maid is, and when she leaves

you, late,

You've no more of lawn and lace

Than may serve to veil your face

From the leaden lid's disgrace,

Gay Ladies.

Now she shears your pride of hair,

Which shall deck some other fair,

Gay Ladies,

Uncounting whence the braid is, so a high-piled

head she wear ;

Yet the crone sighs, ' Well-a-day ! '

But a paltry price they'll pay,

For your gold's but gilded gray,

Gay Ladies.

THE PHILTRE.

SHE was a witch Thessalean,

In all strange magic wise.

Where others ended her lore began—

She could draw a star from the skies ;

And I was wild with love of a man,

Whose thoughts I knew on another ran ;

And love divided dies.

Garlands I sold for Isis' shrine,

At the corner of the street,

In mist of winter and spring sunshine,

Through the crowd and the dust and the heat.

I could hear his coming, aye, divine,

For his step was known to these ears of mine

In the thick of the footfalls' beat.

It came about in a common way.

He bought a rose as he passed ;

And then he would woo me every day,

Till the Venus-die was cast,

And I lived his mistress all one May

—Maia, Mala, the people say—

But I was true to the last.

Never the sky had seemed so blue,

The roses never so red :

Sweet even the Cypress and the rue,

In the wreaths I wove for the dead.

All of the world seemed fresh and new,

Buds so many, and thorns so few.

Ah, how the good days sped !

He left me. Hunger I knew, and thirst;
Old Marcia spoke me fair.
A handsome lad that of old she nurs'd,
Menander's spendthrift heir,
Had spoke himself, had he only durst . . .
But I bade her begone, and the beldame curs'd
That the bird should 'scape the snare.

A far, far way, through the wind and rain,
I fared the dark night through,
Till I found the witch, with trouble and pain,
And gained the philtre due,
And journeyed back through the wide campaign,
With the charm to win me my love again,
And keep him always true.

At the tavern, beside the Hippodrome,
The drug in his wine I set.
I pledg'd him, and pray'd him that night come
Pay a light love's last debt--
'Climb once more to my little home,
Then, if you will, be our ways in Rome,
As though we had never met.'

'Cured for ever of wandering,'
Were the words the witch had said.
Home I hastened at evening,
And there he lay on the bed,
His lips pressed fast to a woman's ring--
A costly. Mine was a paltry thing--
Smiling, calm, and dead !

VANITAS VANITATUM.

THIS, this, her mirror—she would pass
An hour before it, as she pressed
My brown against her golden curls,
Or twined her plaits with braided pearls—
Held to her mute mouth's marble rest
Receives no breath to dim the glass.

The down plucked from this fan of hers—
Light toy of ostrich feather tips,
To shield her face from sun or wind,
To whisper or to laugh behind—
Laid close upon her parted lips
No faintest pulse of breathing stirs.

HESTERNAE ROSAE.

ONE day the rose may pass from Paestum's plain,
Perish, and pass, perchance, from all the Earth.
Brothers, enjoy your little day of mirth,
For last year's roses come no more again.

These, where the cymbals clash in festal strain,
Gracing all night a festival's unrest,
Die, at the dawning, on a woman's breast—
Ah ! last year's roses come no more again.

These, twined by mourners in a funeral train,
Laid at the last on some lost lover's pyre,
With myrrh and spices, perish in the fire—
The last year's roses come no more again.

These fade augustly in a marble fane,
Yet fade as surely—though they wreath a god—
As any blossom in the mire trod—
The last year's roses come no more again.

Whether sun-scorched they fall, or ruined by rain,
Or nipped untimely by the frosts of spring,
Or till late autumn lonely lingering—
The last year's roses come no more again.

Youth's damask roses, thorn-set rose of pain,
Red rose of passion, pale rose of regret,
With first kiss warm, with last leave-taking wet.
Ah, last year's roses come no more again !

PEREGRINA'S SONG.

FAR, very far, steer by my star,
Leaving the loud world's hurry and clamour,
In the mid-sea waits you, maybe,
The Isle of Glamour, where Beauty reigns.
From coasts of commerce and myriad-marted
Towns of traffic by wide seas parted,
Past shoals unmapped and by reefs uncharted,
The single-hearted my isle attains.

Under a sky cloudless and high,
The blue sea's pearl and the green world's wonder,
Dreams thro' her day by that fair bay,
Where no waves thunder, where no winds veer.
No friends forgetful, for hearts remember
When no change mars, and no years dismember,
Where the flame sinks never to ashen ember,
Where no December deflowers the year.

Each soul may find faith to her mind,
Seek you the peace of the groves Elysian,
Or the ivy twine and the wands of vine,
The Dionysian, Orphic rite ?
To share the joy of the Mainad's leaping
In frenzied train thro' the dusk glen sweeping,
The dew-drench'd dance and the star-watch'd
sleeping,
Or temple keeping in vestal white ?

Ye who regret suns that have set,
Lo, each god of the ages golden,
Here is enshrined, ageless and kind,
Unbeholden the dark years through.
Their faithful oracles yet bestowing,
By laurels whisper and clear streams flowing,
Or the leafy stir of the Gods' own going,
In oak trees blowing, may answer you !

In my fair land, perfected stand,
What artists' dreaming and poets' leisure,
Only in thought, fashion'd and wrought
For very pleasure—for Beauty's sake.
The bronze wrought fair to the heart's desire,
The sweet song, fashion'd of tears and fire,
No languid string and no jarring wire,
Where no hands tire, nor voices break !

MARIUS TO FLAVIAN.

LAST Saturnalia, when the house was swept
With bay, and fragrant cedar-sawdust strown,
A mild and measured cheerfulness alone
The others felt, who wondered why I wept ;
Far from the feast my spirit vigil kept,
Far from familiar fires at home that burn,
My heart yet haunted by your lonely urn.

I brooded on that tomb whose niches keep
Their withered garlands, wetted once with tears—
Drugg'd by the anodyne of drowsy years.
How hath old Passion sobb'd himself to sleep,
In vain you call upon him now to weep ;
As soon attempt the perfume to express
From those dead garlands sere and odourless.

Baked earth and alabaster, row by row,
The little urns in serried rank are press'd ;
Like doves in dovecote, folded safe to rest,
Storms of the world well past and over, now,
Dear voices fallen silent long ago,
And kind old heads, now sleeping dreamlessly,
That will not sound, that will not wake for me.

I tasted fragrant fruit, I drank old wine,
And still with passionate, purposeless regret
I lay uncomforted, remembering yet
Against whose breast last year I could recline.
Ah ! Idol of my heart's now desert shrine—
Still, when in midmost mirth a silence fell,
Through all the roses breathed the cypress smell.

Sure, dear, in your dim underworld endures
No single memory, no care for Earth,
Else pitying my starv'd soul's day-long dearth—
No anodyne that soothes, no drug that cures—
You would come back with that old smile of yours,
Breathe me one word, and leave me strong to bear
The white night's watching, the gray dawn's
despair !

THRENODY.

THE wizard peace that broods above
Alcyone's haunted island glade,
Unbroken save by plaining dove
Or Aëdon grieving in the shade,
We break to-night with chanted hymn,
Stirring the aisled cedars dim.

Though, when the fire hath made an end,
He need no more our help or stay,
Lovers a lover, friends a friend,
Within the place of slumber lay--
With tears and flowers for parting alms,
And order'd lamps and precious balms.

Since loves of Earth may be forgot,
 In their dim underworld of dream,
 The dearest dust we mingle not ;
 Once in their resting place supreme,
 Letting each urn its ashes keep
 Uncompany'd, in single sleep.

Each strain of music, sunset cloud,
 Sense, sight, impression exquisite,
 We count, ourselves to Darkness vow'd,
 A lamp against the coming night—
 Bless'd if before the feast be done
 Our lamps expire not, one by one.

In Life's first freshness of the dawn,
 We lost our Orient morning star.
 Farewell, in dusk of death withdrawn,
 Rising again, crepuscular,
 A glimmering even star to be
 For realms of pale Persephone.

SHEEP OF HIS PASTURE.

HALF human, happy hearted things,

To whom this light is dear,

Haunting the dim woods and the sea,

The valley, glade, or mere.

O centaur, naiad, nymph, or dryad,

O fays and fauns and elves—

He, He it is who made you all,

Not you that made yourselves.

Who takes his talent to the mart,

For profit there to ply,

Blurring with touch of baser gold

The stamp of deity—

Who lays it, dight in linen white,

In his shut soul's secret shelves—

He, He it is who made you both,

Not you who made yourselves.

O comfortable tidings for our hapless
Human kind—
The weak, the strong, the lame, the fleet,
The seér, and the blind ;
The seed who sows, the sand who plows,
Who plays, prays, dreams, or delves—
He, He it is who made you all,
Not you who made yourselves.

STAR-GAZER'S SONG.

*Quæ mihi nascenti luxerunt sidera ? Quæ
tam noxia pars cæli est ut me, nil merentem
Læserit, et primis infortunavit ab annis ?*

—*Epitaph of Jacinth Sachaverel, 1650.*

*Star-stricken, constellation-cross'd,
I call to the clear unanswering sky—
'Where lurks my foe, inimical stars ?
'Silver Procyon, ruby Mars ?
'A gem of the glittering galaxy ?'*

*Was it Aldeboran's rusted gold
Mis-ruled my wayward destiny ?
Whose was the influence malign ?
Emerald Altaïr, was't thine ?
Thine leaden Saturn, heavy and cold ?
Or Opaline Algol's evil eye ?*

TRANSLATIONS.



S'IL L'AVAIT SU.

(*Marceline Desbordes Valmore.*)

HAD he but known what sort of soul he hurt,
Seen my heart's tears and havoc he had wrought;
And had my mind, with dreams of him inert,
But kept the power to express its thought,
Surely he could not thus have changed to me,
Led me to build up hopes that now lie prone;
He would have answered my love lovingly—
Had he but known !

Had he but known all that he might expect
 From this my loving heart, he had desired
 To hear its pleading simple and direct,
 And known that love which he to me inspired ;
 Though heart was fain its secret to control,
 My rebel eyes methought my love would own.
 My secret sure was worth a man's whole soul—
 Had he but known !

Had I but known to what a hapless fate
 I doomed myself whilst looking in his eyes,
 I had not sought him as I did of late,
 But borne my sorrow under other skies.
 It is too late to live my life again,
 That hope that was my life forever flown—
 Will you not say, who caused me all this pain ?
 ' Had I but known ! '

“ EN CHEMIN.”

(*Catulle Mendez.*)

TRAVELLER, spurring through the woods—
The dripping, yellow, autumn-dyed,
Unhappy glades, where glamour broods—
Whither and wherefore do you ride ?
Shrill elfin voices down the glen
Would lure you to their festival.
Assume the proffered coronal,
And reign a King o'er elves and men.—

Not so, to the world's end I ride,
To win at last my Golden Bride.

Hark ! On the wandering breezes borne
Come thrilling chords of faëry,
The tender music of the horn
And harp's triumphant minstrelsy.

See the quivering branches stir—
 Haloed round with pallid flame,
 Morgan Le Fay has breath'd your name,
 Open your heart, your arms to her.—

Not so, my arms shall only fold
 At the world's end my Bride of Gold.

O traveller, so fast, so far,
 You fain must ride, if you would win,
 To the world's end, the morning star
 Await, ere you your course begin ;
 We will give you to drink anon
 That which shall make you quit your quest,
 A magic potion—Peace and Rest—
 The water of oblivion.—

Not till to the world's end, I've past
 And won, or lost, my Bride at last !

LOVE O'ERTHROWN.

(Verlaine.)

THE wind the other night, in its rough play,
Has overthrown Eros and laid him low,
Eros, whose aspect as he bent his bow,
Made us so thoughtful all one summer's day.

The storm has cast him down, our marble Love.
He lies all shattered on the mossy earth ;
On the plinth, the Sculptor's name who gave him
birth,
Is half obscured by trees that wave above.

Woe's me to see his vacant column stand
Wanting his image ; sad thoughts rise and pass,
As I sit here and dream—such dreams, alas—
Dreams of a lonely future sorrow banned.

And does Love's tragic ending nowise move
Your heart to some regret, although your eye
Smile at the gold and crimson butterfly
Which hovers o'er the ruin that was Love.

MANDOLINE.

(Verlaine.)

THE fair who are serenaded,
The swains who serenade,
Exchange their flatt'ries faded
In a choral woodland glade.

Amynta's there, and Thyrsis,
Clitander his mistress meets,
While Damis his thousandth verses
To his hundredth fair repeats.

With gay refinement dressed,
Each trailing robe à queue,
Each broider'd silken vest
Turns with faint shadow blue.

Whirls in the ecstasy
Of a rose-pearl moon serene,
Whilst in the breeze's sigh
Tinkles the Mandoline.

CLAIR DE LUNE.

(Verlaine.)

YOUR soul is a chosen glade of faëry,
Wherein with lutes do the Masquers fare,
Dancing, and yet a little weary,
Under their antic guise and air.

They do not seem—in the minor singing
The joys of life and all conqu'ring love—
As tho' they believe the words they're stringing,
Which die away in the moon-lit grove.

Of the calm, sad moon each bird is dreaming—
The lovely moon!—in every tree;
And the slim, fair jets of the fountains gleaming,
Sob 'mong their marbles with ecstasy.

COLLOQUE SENTIMENTAL.

(*Verlaine.*)

BUT just now, through the Park so lonely,
 Passed two figures with dim, dead eyes,
 And lips so stiff that by bending only
 Could you have caught their low replies.

For the wind was singing with wailing voice
 Over the wood a requiem—
 ‘ Have you forgotten our ancient joys ? ’
 ‘ Aye, why should I remember them ? ’

‘ Does your heart still flame as you hear my name ?
 ‘ Do you see me still in your visions ? ’ ‘ No.’
 ‘ Do you sigh for the blisses of bygone kisses
 In the old, old days ? ’ ‘ Nay, was it so ? ’

‘ How blue was the sky, our hopes how high ;
Now hope has fled, and the skies are black,
And the past is dead.’ The phantoms sped,
But I heard their words on the wind brought
back.

MARJOLAINE.

(Gustave Kahn.)

‘WHAT waters forded, what valleys past,
What leafy tangle of woods to thread—
You come to my lonely lodge at last,
Whose larder’s void and whose hearth is dead.
In blowing wind, and in driving rain,
How have you lingered, Marjolaine ? ’

‘In mantle satin and fine array,
Through park and orchard, wood and lane,
I set out in the morning gray,
And springtide blossom and vernal rain
Made life so tender, so sweet a thing,
I knew not whether to sigh or sing.’

‘ Why did you tarry to come, so long
Here I was waiting all the years,
My day, from matins to evensong,
Heavy with doubt and dim with tears—
Grieved as I saw, disconsolate,
Less loyal lovers, more fortunate ? ’

‘ I met a young Knight riding by,
From perilous contest overseas,
Wounded returning, pityingly
I took his head upon my knees,
And listened for more than a night and day,
To tales of the countries far away.’

‘ Leave my ruinous lodge and me,
As soon as the moon overcome the dark—
Back to your Palace’s bravery,
And violet spaces of your Park—
Your marble terraces seek again,
Back to your lover, O Marjolaine.’

‘ I shall be gone at peep of day,
Back to my Knights and my Troubadours ;
From mantle satin and fine array,
I shake the dust of this lodge of yours,
Leaving you leaven of bitter bread—
To watch and to wait—uncomforted.’

GOSSAMER.

(Henri De Regnier.)

I NEVER spun the woollen, nor wove the flaxen
thread ;
No wonted maiden-symbol be carv'd where I lie
dead,
For distaff, shuttle, needle show a life of labour
fain,
My folded hands were idle, my short life's day
was vain.

And for you—you—to remember and call me back
to mind—

No need of shuttle, distaff, thread—was I not fair
and kind ?

I never spun the flaxen thread, I never wove the
wool,

I gave you hours of pleasure, once, and a body
beautiful.

I never labour'd gathering up threads of the idle
hours !

Each day might bear its own away with each
day's faded flowers,

I never hemm'd my life's web up, nor wove it into
lawn,

A cold wind breath'd and scatter'd it but a little
after dawn !

Idle threads of an idle life—wandering, vain and
light—

Floating across your memory now, soon to be out
of sight.

Ungrateful, with half-heeding eye, you watch my
life's thread stray

Supple, wandering, gossamer thread, the light
wind bears away.

ODELETTE.

(Henri De Regnier.)

AH ! had I better known my love,
My life if I had better known,
I had not twined my life with yours,
My life with all your thoughts, your hours,
Not blended these two loves of ours,
But lov'd and liv'd my life—alone !

Who to his true love off'ring bears
Of thorn-set rose, her hand that tears ?
Who at a bittter spring would slake
Her lips, that cooling water sought ?
Who would those dainty hands employ—
That should be spinning gossamer joy—
With sordid wool, with flaxen thread
The fateful spinning sisters wrought ?

Lo, you are standing in my life,
Here at the cross-road of my ways !
The spring wells at your feet, and rife
With thorn the rose to-you-ward sways.
You pluck the rose, the draught approve,
You take the spinning up, and stand
Smiling to find Fate's web so free
From wry-spun threads of Destiny,
Smiling to find yourself alone,
Love, with your lover, hand in hand !

. . . Yet, had I better known my love.
I had not bound my life with yours,
My life with all your thoughts, and hours,
Not blended these two lives of ours,
My life with yours !

CHYSILLA.

(*Henri De Regnier.*)

WHEN comes the hour for my passing fated,
 Dear goddess ! spare me sight, as I lie low,
 Of Chronos, stern and tearless, shearing slow
 My weary, outworn thread of life belated.
 There is one yet more cruel, well I know.
 Arm Eros rather, me he ever hated
 Who would but smile, with malice unabated,
 Watching my wounded heart's last red drops flow.
 Nay, then, what need of shears, on dart death-
 dealing ?

Let but my Youth beside the fountain kneeling
 Silent, naked and fair, shed rose leaves light !

. . . . The dropping water's tears for all leave-
 taking,

I will lie down for sleep that has no waking,
 And close my eyes for the unending night !

THE DANCE.

(Henri De Regnier.)

Though grudging gold the elm and birch tree
gladdens,

And scanty purple of the years decline.

You dance, the fair day round you sets and
saddens—

Still green the wood with cypress and with pine,
Despite of Autumn, russet and gold advancing,

Summer from out her slumber seems to rise
From sloth delicious waking, when in your
dancing

In tip-toe flight you float with half-shut eyes,
As tho' you sought to stay some unreturning
Untarrying vision, in your arms entwined,

Seeking those fleeting lips, or cold, or burning,
Bitter, or sweet, that pass upon the wind !
You dance, and still, intent, with no word spoken,
Ever you follow what eludes you still !
Autumn has come ! and now it's rhythm broken,
My faithful flute that waited on your will,
Falters and fails, no move the measure keeping,
As, tir'd at last, your dance falls slow and
 slower,
Where round your feet in golden train a-sweeping
Languid and light the leaves Autumnal shower !

SONNET FOR BILITIS.

(Henri De Regnier.)

SISTERS, our slow growth ripened sisterly
On the same trellis, to delicious fruit,
Our days, by Time now trodden underfoot,
Fled, like new wine's ephemeral witchery.
Old age is here, greedy and sly to boot,—
He robs our wither'd clusters hungrily.
I hear in the vaulted cellar creak and cry
The groaning press that summer-long was mute.
Sisters, an unremember'd memory
You leave behind, a dusty wineskin dry,
But I, the gold-wing'd muses' darling, pray
That fragrant-scented wine-jars lot for me,
Where still the flight of a prison'd honey-bee
Murmurs and hums, shut in the Amphora.

FUNERAL MARCH FOR THE DEATH
OF THE EARTH.

(Jules Laforgue.)

WEAVE and unweave your train O planets
splendid,
Solemn, in golden pomp sidereal.
Softly and sadly, by slow dirge attended,
Lead on your sleeping sister's funeral !

Her hour at last has come, the Earth, expiring
With a last breath, half trembling sigh, half
groan,
In Night's unbroken silence now retiring,
Floats, derelict, thro' the still sky, alone.
Coffin of myriad dead, inert and tragic,
Was all a dream, is this reality?
Yet Earth recall your life's long poem tragic . . .
. . . Nay, sleep, all's over, sleep eternally.

Have you forgotten, Earth, your primal ages,
When, for all music of long days and eves,
You had the wind's wild song, the sea's deaf rages,
The silvery rustle of green buds and leaves,
Till man, frail rebel, her veil aside was sweeping
A fair Illusion filled yon starry sky,
Which echo'd only, since, his ceaseless weeping !
. . . But sleep, all's over, sleep eternally !

Is all forgotten, your middle-age's sadness ?

Wild hymns of menace, and the passing bell !
 Famine that ground old bones for bread in
 madness ?

Robbing the pit that Plague had filled too well !
 When man, predestination's terrors nursing
 Hopeless and fearful of his Deity,
 His God and Father bless'd, his brothers cursing !
 . . . But sleep, all's over, sleep eternally !

Age of the sombre Quire, rose windows glazing,
 Incense and bells for blood stain'd altar's rite !
 Great Organs, thundering Hosanna's raising,
 Pale cloistral loves in lonely convent white.
 And later age, when man, his god denying—
 Fatherless, Judgeless on a winter sea—
 Cry'd in his doubt, to deaf stars unreplying—
 . . . But sleep, all's over, sleep eternally !

Man's handywork, Art, Science, of old arisen,
 And War that gluts the furrow to feed the
 sheep.

The stake, the scaffold, torture-chamber, prison,
 Brothel and madhouse, galley and donjon deep.

Thirst, Hunger, Drink. a myriad ills bestowing
 Luxury, Ennui, Love, and Charity,

With what red fires was once your cold ash
 glowing !

. . . . But sleep, all's over, sleep eternally !

Buddha, who life condemn'd, yet loved all living,
 Where has he, with his gracious gospel, sped ?

And He the kind and sad who knew misgiving
 And doubted, dying, the faith for which he bled,
 Where all the nameless souls who wrote and
 pondered

With passion of tears to find Life's mystery,
 Unsolved, insoluble, as blind, they wandered—

. . . . But sleep, all's over, sleep eternally !

Nothing of painting's charm, of music's haunting,
 Hellenic Goddess, or Germanic sage,
 Of fretted belfry spire skyward vaunting,
 Of victories vain, recorded page by page !
 All perish'd that for shame or glory splendid,
 Your children's sacred madness brought to be,
 O, Earth, your dream, your mighty dream is ended !
 But sleep, all's over, sleep eternally !

No more a world, a tomb, at hazard rolling,
 A nameless star in unrememb'ring Night,
 Sleep on, all's over, deem, for your consoling,
 Your long life's drama but a daydream's flight,
 You never liv'd, t'was but a dream's persistence.
 Alone, with nought that thinks, with nought to
 see,
 Here, Silence, Darkness, Time have sole
 existence
 Sleep, dream no more, sleep on,
 eternally.

Weave and unweave your train, O planets
splendid,
Solemn, in golden pomp sidereal !
Softly and slowly by grave dirge attended,
Lead on your sleeping sister's funeral !

THE PILGRIM OF FATE.

To Destiny I pilgrim went
For whom alone no altars rise,
No incense fumes, no spikenard drips.
She gazes down the centuries
On all futurity intent.
A smile upon her marble lips.

I mute before her Idol bowed
Whose peace nor praise nor prayer stirs
Whom Gods revere and Daimons dread,
Who still, by myriad ministers
The passive leads but drags the proud
The way predestined each must tread.

How should she heed—that stony sphynx—
The tiny flame which lights our years?
Our puny heart that throbs and bleeds?
She counts the throbbing of the spheres,
—The fount of fire that springs and sinks
From worlds aflame—not us—she heeds.

Ah ! seek no longer with Fate to war,
Lay passion by, since strife is vain !
Who dares his destiny to brave
Has such reward for all his pain
As his, who slings against a star,
Or aims an arrow to wound the wave.

ISLAND FORTUNATE.

FARE fortunately mariners who steer 'neath
Summer skies
To nearer ports, for surer gain, full freighted
argosies.
Your trafficking unhindered be by harms the
Fates unflict
The blind oncoming of the berg or galley derelict.
Better ye deem to tempt the deep than moulder at
the quay,
Sure, what the heedful merchant dare, we—how
much rather—may,
All ocean patent to our quest, who seek with
hearts elate
The shining happy palaces of Island Fortunate.

We passed a convoy-guarded fleet in sunset
waters rocked

The careful coasters cried to us, the men of battle
mocked

As half regretfully we gazed where floating fair
and free

The pennons of the fighting ships dipped silken to
the sea.

We know not how their traffic throve, nor how
the battle sped

But these we left to count their pelf, and these to
tell their dead.

As vain their dream of petty gain, as theirs of
martial state

To us who sought the wide world through for
Island Fortunate.

What waits us, once our goal attained? For each
one as I deem
The utter realising of his every dearest dream,
I think that as our wave-worn ship drops anchor
in that bay,
A honey-coloured harvest moon will mock the
paler day,
Lighting the league-long gardens up, whose hidden
hollows hold
The ruddy glow of oranges, the citron's paler gold,
Whilst—sundered half a life-time long by some
untoward fate—
Lost lovers wait to welcome us to Island Fortunate.

Our company grows still the less, for certain of
our train

A seeming El-Dorado once gleamed golden from
the main ;

I think that on that barren reef some specious
magic burned,

Never our comrades came again, never their boat
returned,

And some one long, long winter slept and wak'd
no more in spring,

And some were lost who rowed at night to hear
the Mermaid sing.

More witching music they had heard had they but
heart to wait,

Melody passing sirens' song, in Island Fortunate.

Young-hearted as at setting forth—gray-headed,
say the churls ?

'Tis that the sea spray dusts with white our salt-
encumbered curls,—

Still in a wide and wintry waste we fare upon our
quest

Not elsewhere can we find a home, nor other-
where a rest.

To catch what wind of heaven may blow our sails
are still unfurled.

We sail the vast uncharted deep, the wondrous
water-world

Somewhere to find, somewhen to see, somehow
to win, though late

The fair far haven in the sea of Island Fortunate.

Cradled by some consoling dream he who should
vigil keep
An hour before a shameful death, sinks smiling
into sleep,
And mirage-mocked, the cast-away scanning a
sailless sea
Leaps headlong down the glassy deep in meadow
green to be ;
It turns the wasted wilderness to watered paradise
—Last vision, as the sand-storm blinds the dying
pilgrim's eyes.—
Our life is ruled by mirages, and just beyond the
gate
Whether of Horn or Ivory lies Island Fortunate.

FROM THE ANTHOLOGY.

THE FRIEND FORGETFUL.

SINCE that your heart forgets me, why should I,
then, regret

The lamp unlit upon my tomb, the votive wreath
unset?

What could he hope for, being dead, saving to be
forgot,

Whom in his life Porphyron, you oft remember'd
not.

A DEDICATION.

Laïs, the haughty Laïs, who erst was found so sweet,
Who had all Hellas suppliant, a lover at her feet,
Now that her life's thread lengthens out, spun by
the tardy Fates,
Unto the Cytherean her mirror dedicates.

Take, Aphrodite youthful and fair immortally,
My cruel once lov'd looking-glass now hateful
grown, since I
Can see myself no more therein as once I us'd to be,
Nor yet endure as now I am, my mirror'd face to
see !

FOR A TOMB.

SABINUS, friend Sabinus, the stone is small, and
yet

Take it in earnest of my love and limitless regret !
Ever shall I remember you, and you, if it may be,
Do you not drink from Lethe forgetfulness of me !



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